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ABSTRACT

The report presents data on changes in social studies achievement for young Americans aged nine, 13, and 17 during the period 1972-76. Data were collected through two surveys conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress during the 1971-72 and 1975-76 school years. Test items were categorized in three major areas: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Four topics included under knowledge were economics, geography, history, and politics. Skill items dealt with ability to obtain and interpret information; questions about attitudes covered support for constitutional rights and respect for others. In this report, the first three chapters describe results for the three major areas. Each chapter includes a summary of changes in national performance, samples of the items used, and data for various population groups. Chapter four compares achievement for 13 and 17-year-olds. Overall results of the assessment revealed that nine-year-olds showed no statistically significant change in performance, and that 13 and 17-year-olds' performance declined. Seventeen-year-old Hispanic students and students living in the West displayed smaller declines than the nation as a whole. Although overall performance of blacks remained below that of whites, at age nine blacks showed more improvement than whites. At age 13 black performance remained the same while white performance declined. (Author/AV)

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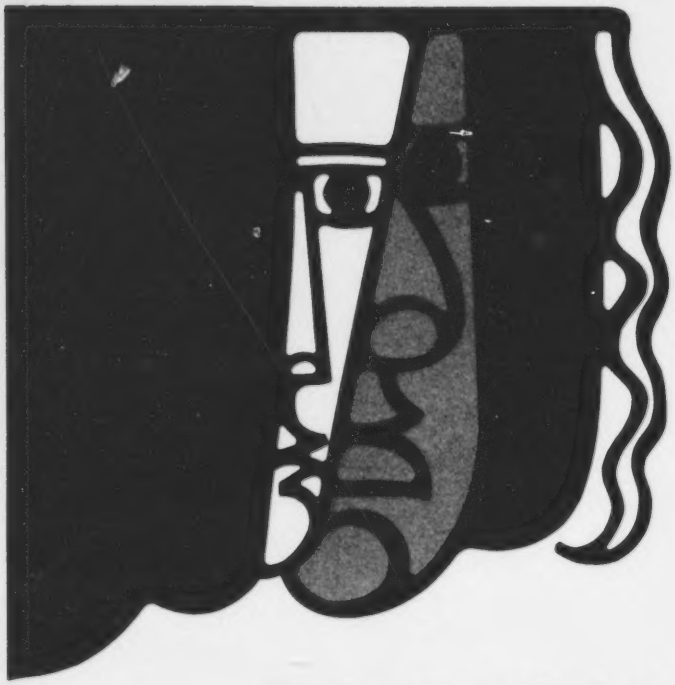

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The cost figure cited above represents the total amount of money expended since late 1973 on assessments in art, career and occupational development, reading, writing, social studies/citizenship, science, basic life skills, mathematics and consumerism, resulting, to date, in numerous reports, papers, articles, presentations and assessment materials, many of which are used in state and local assessment programs. A complete list of all such materials is available upon request.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

Errata Sheet

for

CHANGES IN SOCIAL STUDIES PERFORMANCE, 1972-76

Report 07-SS-01

Page 13 The third series of bars is missing a W for White at the bottom and a number: 1.1. The fifth series lacks a label at the top; it should be Size of Community.

Page 14 The Group Mean Change figure at the bottom for Females is blurred; it should be -1.3*.

Page 25 One box in the key at the top is missing. Performance in 1976 is shown by the bars with cross-hatching.

Page 40 The figure for Age 13 in the top box under 1972 Performance is blurred; it should be 56.7.

CHANGES IN SOCIAL STUDIES PERFORMANCE, 1972-76

SELECTED RESULTS FROM THE SECOND ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Social Studies Report No.
07-SS-01

by the
National Assessment of Educational Progress

Education Commission of the States
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September 1978

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES v

LIST OF EXHIBITS vii

LIST OF FIGURES ix

FOREWORD xi

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xiii

INTRODUCTION 1
- Overall Results 1
- Measuring Social Studies Achievement 1
- Developing Objectives and Items 2
- Measuring Changes in Achievement 2
- Reporting the Data 2
- Reporting Data for 17-Year-Olds 3

CHAPTER 1 KNOWLEDGE 5
- Highlights of the Results 5
- Economics 6
- Geography 7
- History 8
- Politics 10
- Group Results 11

CHAPTER 2 SKILLS 17
- Highlights of the Results 17
- Obtaining Information 18
- Interpreting Information 20
- Group Results 24

CHAPTER 3 ATTITUDES 29
- Highlights of the Results 29
- Results for Selected Attitudes Items 30
- Group Results 32

CHAPTER 4 A COMPARISON OF 13- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS' ACHIEVEMENT 39
- Group Results 42

APPENDIX DEFINITIONS OF REPORTING GROUPS 53

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Social Studies Knowledge Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17 5

TABLE 2. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Economics Items: Ages 13 and 17 6

TABLE 3. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on History Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17 9

TABLE 4. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Political Knowledge Items: Ages 13 and 17 10

TABLE 5. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Social Studies Skills Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17 17

TABLE 6. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Obtaining Information Items: Ages 9 and 13 18

TABLE 7. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Interpreting Information Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17 20

TABLE 8. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Attitudes Items: Ages 13 and 17 30

TABLE 9. Average 1976 Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds and Differences in 13- and 17-Year-Old Performance for Knowledge and Skills Topics 41

LIST OF EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT 1. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Consequences of Industrialization," Ages 13 and 17 7

EXHIBIT 2. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Which Is a Southern State?" Age 9 8

EXHIBIT 3. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Why Did the Colonies Rebel Against Great Britain?" Ages 13 and 17 9

EXHIBIT 4. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Which Body Declares Acts of Congress Unconstitutional?" Ages 13 and 17 11

EXHIBIT 5. Mean Performance for 9-Year-Olds on Knowledge Items, 1972 and 1976 13

EXHIBIT 6. Mean Performance for 13-Year-Olds on Knowledge Items, 1972 and 1976 14

EXHIBIT 7. Mean Performance for 17-Year-Olds on Knowledge Items, 1972 and 1976 15

EXHIBIT 8. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is Used to Find Correct Spelling?" Age 9 18

EXHIBIT 9. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Source Would You Use to Locate an Article?" Ages 13 and 17 19

EXHIBIT 10. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Using a Table of Contents," Age 9 19

EXHIBIT 11. Item "What Is the Picture of the Crossed Hands Meant to Show?" Ages 9, 13 and 17 21

EXHIBIT 12. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Which State Is Smaller?" Age 9 21

EXHIBIT 13. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is the Central Problem Being Discussed?" Age 17 22

EXHIBIT 14. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is Central Problem Involving Congressman Jones?" Age 17 23

EXHIBIT 15. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is the Difference Between Highest and Lowest Average Temperatures Shown on Graph?" Ages 13 and 17 23

EXHIBIT 16. Mean Performance for 9-Year-Olds on Skills Items, 1972 and 1976 25

EXHIBIT 17. Mean Performance for 13-Year-Olds on Skills Items, 1972 and 1976 26

EXHIBIT 18. Mean Performance for 17-Year-Olds on Skills Items, 1972 and 1976 27

EXHIBIT 19. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Should Newspapers and Magazines Be Allowed to Publish Criticism?" Ages 13 and 17 30

EXHIBIT 20. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Should An Accused Person Be Punished Immediately?" Ages 13 and 17 31

EXHIBIT 21. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Report Vandalism," Age 17 32

EXHIBIT 22. Mean Performance for 9-Year-Olds on Attitudes Items, 1972 and 1976 33

EXHIBIT 23. Mean Performance for 13-Year-Olds on Attitudes Items, 1972 and 1976 34

EXHIBIT 24. Mean Performance for 17-Year-Olds on Attitudes Items, 1972 and 1976 35

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items in Social Studies Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 40

FIGURE 2. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Region in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 44

FIGURE 3. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Sex in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 45

FIGURE 4. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Race in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 46

FIGURE 5. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Type of Community in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 48

FIGURE 6. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Size of Community in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 49

FIGURE 7. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Level of Parental Education in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes 50

FOREWORD

When the U.S. Office of Education was chartered in 1867, one charge to its commissioners was to determine the nation's progress in education. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was initiated a century later to address, in a systematic way, that charge.

Each year since 1969, National Assessment has gathered information about levels of educational achievement across the country and reported its findings to the nation. NAEP surveys the educational attainments of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults (ages 26—35) in 10 learning areas: art, career and occupational development, citizenship, literature, mathematics, music, reading, science, social studies and writing. Different learning areas are assessed every year, and all areas are periodically reassessed in order to measure change in educational achievement. National Assessment has interviewed and tested more than 630,000 young Americans since 1969.

Learning area assessments evolve from a consensus process. Each assessment is the product of several years of work by a great many educators, scholars and lay persons from all over the nation. Initially, these people design objectives for each subject area, proposing general goals they feel Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. After careful reviews, these objectives are given to exercise (item) writers, whose task it is to create measurement tools appropriate to the objectives.

When the exercises have passed extensive reviews by subject-matter specialists, measurement experts and lay persons, they are administered to probability samples. The people who compose those samples are chosen in such a way that the results of their assessment can be generalized to an entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 9-year-olds on a given exercise, we can generalize about the probable performance of all 9-year-olds in the nation.

After assessment data have been collected, scored and analyzed, National Assessment publishes reports to disseminate results as widely as possible. Not all exercises are released for publication. Because NAEP will administer some of the same exercises again in the future to determine whether the performance level of Americans has increased or decreased, it is essential that they not be released in order to preserve the integrity of the study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many organizations and individuals have made substantial contributions to the social studies assessment. Unfortunately, it is not possible to acknowledge them all here, and an apology is due to those whose names have been omitted.

The original preparation of objectives and exercises in the area of social studies was done by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey. Additional exercises in the attitudinal domain were developed by the American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, California. Materials were reviewed by dozens of consultants, including educators, subject-matter experts and interested lay persons, under the general guidance of the National Assessment staff.

The administration of the social studies assessment was conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Measurement Research Center (MRC), Iowa City, Iowa. Scoring and processing were carried out by MRC and by the National Assessment staff.

The actual preparation of this report was a collaborative effort of the National Assessment staff. Special thanks must be given to the following people and departments: Data Processing Department for data processing support; Valerie Daniels for technical proofreading; Marci Reser and Paula Pitchford for production; Ina Mullis for technical planning, analysis and editing. The report was written by Barbara Ward.

Roy H. Forbes
Director

INTRODUCTION

Two surveys conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress measured achievement in social studies — the first administered during the 1971—72 school year and the second during the 1975—76 school year. These surveys provide data on changes in social studies achievement for young Americans aged 9, 13 and 17.

Overall Results

Changes in social studies achievement between 1972 and 1976[1] appeared related to age level:

- Nine-year-olds showed no statistically significant change in performance.
- Thirteen-year-olds' achievement tended to decline slightly.
- Seventeen-year-olds' performance dropped by approximately 3 percentage points.

Some groups within these national populations showed changes in achievement different from the overall patterns:

- While performance of blacks remained below that of whites, at age 9, blacks displayed a greater improvement than whites; at age 13, black performance remained the same while white performance declined. However, for 17-year-olds, black and white declines were very similar.
- Seventeen-year-old Hispanic students and students living in the West displayed smaller declines than the nation as a whole. Seventeen-year-olds living in affluent-urban communities declined slightly more than did the entire nation.

Measuring Social Studies Achievement

The items included in the social studies assessments are categorized in three major areas: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Four topics are discussed under knowledge — economics, geography, history and politics. Skills items deal with ability to obtain and to interpret information; questions about attitudes cover support for constitutional rights and respect for others.

The first three chapters of this report describe results for each of these areas. Each chapter includes a summary of changes in national performance, samples of the items used and data for various population groups. The fourth chapter compares 13- and 17-year-old achievement.

National Assessment releases for publication approximately half of the items used in a particular assessment year. The items that are not released are kept secure and will be used to measure changes in achievement in the next assessment. In this report, results for both released items and unreleased items are discussed; however, the text of unreleased items is not given and these items are not described in detail.

It should be remembered that the items used by National Assessment do not cover everything that might be asked about a specific content area. Thus, care should be

[1] For purposes of convenience in this report, each assessment year is referred to by the *last* year of the school year in which the assessment took place.

used in generalizing results from a particular set of items to an overall statement about an area.

Developing Objectives and Items

The social studies items were designed to measure achievement of the 1971—72 social studies objectives,[2] which represent a consensus of educators, subject-matter experts and concerned lay persons about what young Americans should know and be able to do in this subject area. These objectives are not an attempt to mandate behavior or value systems; rather, they present goals that a diverse group of people identified as desirable for young Americans to accomplish. National Assessment results describe the proportion of people achieving various aspects of these goals and changes in those proportions over time, but do not indicate the proportion that educators or the public might expect to achieve a particular goal.

All National Assessment items and scoring guides are reviewed by groups that include educators, subject-matter experts and lay persons to help insure that items will not be misinterpreted by students, that the reading level is appropriate for the age group assessed and that scoring guides are correct. To reduce the possibility of racial, ethnic or sexual bias, representatives of some minority groups and both males and females are included in the review process. Following reviews, items are tried out on small groups of students, and any unforeseen difficulties with the items are corrected at this stage.

Measuring Changes in Achievement

Testing conditions must be as nearly the same as possible in each assessment to assure an accurate measure of changes in performance. National Assessment makes every effort to hold conditions constant by tape-recording instructions and items and by using trained administrators, rather than classroom personnel, to conduct the assessment. Items used to measure change are identical in wording and format in each survey. Comparable samples of young people are drawn for each assessment year.[3]

Item scoring must also remain consistent across assessment years. Approximately 80% of the items were multiple choice. These were scored by an optical scanning machine; the same answers were keyed correct in each assessment year. The remaining 20% of the items were open-ended. Scoring guides for open-ended items, which define categories of acceptable and unacceptable responses, were revised to include examples of both 1972 and 1976 responses. To check scoring consistency for open-ended items, National Assessment obtained a subsample of the 1972 responses by randomly selecting responses from each sampling unit across the country. Each of the selected responses was scored by two 1976 scorers, and the consistency of their scores with the score given in 1972 was checked. Scoring done in 1976 was found to be highly consistent with that done in 1972. Some scoring guides used in 1972 had to be revised to account for responses obtained in 1976; in these cases, the 1972 responses were rescored with the 1976 responses.

Reporting the Data

Differences in performance between assessments on specific items are described as changes *only* if the difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. This means, statistically, that we are 95% confident that these differences are real and *not* a chance artifact of the sample. Differences that are not statistically significant at the .05 level are described as being "not appreciably different." Positive differences indicate that

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[2] *Social Studies Objectives*, 1971—72 Assessment (Denver, Colo.: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1970).

[3] J.R. Chromy et al., *The National Assessment Approach to Sampling* (Denver, Colo.: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1974).

more people made a particular response in 1976 than in the first assessment; negative differences show that fewer people made a particular response in the second assessment than in the first.

This report also describes differences in average performance. Performance is averaged over a group of items for each assessment year, and the difference between the averages is then computed. Positive differences indicate that average performance in 1976 was higher than in the first assessment; negative differences show that performance in the second assessment was lower than in the first. Average differences are asterisked or discussed as differences only if they are significant at the .05 level.

In this report, we compare average performance on identical sets of items administered at two different points in time. Comparisons between the average performance of different age groups should not be made because these averages are based on different sets of items. Comparisons among different content areas should be made with care since the difficulty of the items in each area is a factor in performance. Performances of 13- and 17-year-olds on identical sets of items are compared in Chapter 4.

Reporting Data for 17-Year-Olds

National Assessment gathers data for 17-year-olds who are not attending school at the time of the assessment as well as for those who are in school. Unless otherwise noted, data presented in this report are only for 17-year-olds in school, since it was felt that these data would be more useful for educators. Generally, results for *all* 17-year-olds are 1 or 2 percentage points lower than for in-school 17-year-olds only.

CHAPTER 1

KNOWLEDGE

The kinds of knowledge that can come under the heading "social studies" at times seem almost limitless. The proliferation of electives in the social studies and the relaxing of specific course requirements have made it less likely that all students will share a common body of knowledge. In addition, the social studies curriculum has moved away from an emphasis on knowledge of specific bits of information towards a greater emphasis on understanding concepts and applying information.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress social studies objectives, developed through a consensus of many groups of consultants, stress knowledge of four major social studies topics — economics, geography, history and politics. While these topics certainly are not inclusive of all that might be considered, the results for them can serve as general indicators of levels of knowledge in the social studies.

Highlights of the Results

Between 1972 and 1976, average results for items measuring social studies knowledge showed:

- No significant changes for 9- and 13-year-olds.
- Approximately a 4-percentage-point decline for 17-year-olds.

Table 1 displays average performance and changes in performance for each age level in each assessment year.

TABLE 1. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Social Studies Knowledge Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 9 *(Number of items = 29)*	63.9%	65.6%	1.6
Age 13 *(Number of items = 54)*	56.8	55.8	-1.1
Age 17 *(Number of items = 59)*	66.4	62.5	-3.9*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.
††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

To further examine these results, we will look at data for each of the four topics — economics, geography, history and politics — and at results for some of the items used to assess each area.

Economics

Questions about economics touch upon such subjects as the consequences of industrialization, the relative resources of the United States and Russia, the value of money and the allocation of personal finances. Since there were very few items for 9-year-olds in this area, results for 13- and 17-year-olds only will be discussed.

Economics was the only one of the four knowledge areas on which 13-year-olds showed a significant improvement between assessments; 17-year-olds, who declined in all four areas, registered their smallest decrease here. Table 2 displays average results and changes in performance for the economics items.

Average results show general trends. To give a more detailed picture of students' performance on questions about economics, several of the items and their results are discussed below.

Displayed in Exhibit 1 is an item dealing with some of the consequences of industrialization.

Around three-fifths of the students at both ages 13 and 17 realized that industrialization makes people more dependent upon one another. Thirteen-year-olds had more difficulty with the question about individual craftsmanship; however, their performance on this question did represent an improvement from the first assessment.

Teenagers were also asked to explain the growing importance of energy resources to the United States. Thirty-eight percent of the 13-year-olds gave a satisfactory explanation, an improvement of 10 percentage points from 1972. Seventeen-year-olds showed no significant change in achievement on this question between assessments, with approximately 62% giving an acceptable answer in 1976.

Approximately two-thirds of the students realized that both the United States and Russia are rich in natural resources; 13-year-olds showed an improvement of 11 percentage points on this question, while 17-year-olds' performance dropped by about 5 percentage points. Fewer students realized that the overproduction of food has been a problem for the United States but not for Russia — 34% of the 13-year-olds and 55% of the 17-year-olds answered correctly. While

TABLE 2. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Economics Items: Ages 13 and 17

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 13 *(Number of items = 11)*	47.7%	50.5%	2.8*
Age 17 *(Number of items = 12)*	60.3	58.5	-1.9*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.
††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 1. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Consequences of Industrialization," Ages 13 and 17

Which of the following things happen when a country becomes highly industrialized?

A. There is greater dependence of people on one another.

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
● Yes	61.8%	-3.7	57.5%	-3.3
○ No	29.6	6.5*	36.0	0.3
○ I don't know.	8.5	-2.9*	6.3	3.2*

B. There is greater emphasis on individual craftsmanship.

○ Yes	40.3	-0.2	29.8	3.4
● No	46.2	5.4*	63.3	-4.7*
○ I don't know.	13.0	-5.7*	6.7	-1.6*

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

results for 13-year-olds on this question remained the same between assessments, those for 17-year-olds declined by 6 percentage points. Seventeen-year-olds appeared to have gained in awareness of how the real value of a country's money is defined; in 1976, 37% responded correctly that the value of money is defined by the amount of goods and services it will buy, compared with 26% in 1972 — an 11-percentage-point improvement.

Geography

Geography items for 9-year-olds concentrated heavily on place names. The assessments for 13- and 17-year-olds contained only a small number of items in this area; the emphasis of these items was on recognizing places on maps and understanding the concepts of longitude and latitude.

On the average, 65% of the 9-year-olds answered the geography items correctly in 1976. Their performance did not change significantly between assessments. While there were not enough 13- and 17-year-olds' items for meaningful averages, performance on the items given tended to go down. At age 13, five of the eight items administered showed declines, and only one of the eight registered an improvement. For 17-year-olds, achievement declined on four of the eight items and remained the same on four.

One item asked 9-year-olds whether various rivers were located in the United States. Most of them (84%) recognized that the Mississippi River is in the United States; approximately two-thirds realized that the Amazon is not. It is interesting to note that of the five rivers included in this item, performance remained approximately the same between assessments for the three American rivers — the Mississippi (84%), the Ohio (71%) and the Missouri (66%) — but improved rather substantially for two foreign rivers — the Amazon (an 8-point improvement, to 66%) and the Rhine (a 12-point improvement, to 72%).

Nine-year-olds had greater difficulty with the location of several states in the Union. As seen in Exhibit 2, 42% recognized that

Mississippi is a state in the South, a percentage that did not change significantly between assessments. Fewer (34%) correctly identified a far Western state in 1976; this represented a 5-percentage-point decline from 1972.

EXHIBIT 2. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Which Is a Southern State?" Age 9

Which one of the following states is in the southern part of the United States?

	1976 Performance†	Change
○ Connecticut	7.9%	0.4
○ Idaho	8.4	-1.9
○ Minnesota	10.1	0.0
● Mississippi	42.3	4.9
○ Ohio	12.8	0.0
○ I don't know.	18.2	-3.3

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.

The number of 9-year-olds who correctly chose the country in which a specified foreign capital was located went down 10 percentage points, with 62% giving the right answer in the second assessment.

Items for 13- and 17-year-olds covered fairly disparate topics, as illustrated by the items discussed below. In one item, the teenagers were shown a world map on which the United States, South America, Europe and Southeast Asia were circled and asked to indicate the area where Spanish is the most commonly spoken language. In 1976, approximately half of the 13-year-olds and two-thirds of the 17-year-olds correctly selected South America — a decline of 7 percentage points for 13-year-olds and 13 percentage points for 17-year-olds.

In both assessments, the majority of the teenagers appeared unsure of the concepts of latitude and longitude. In 1976, 23% of the 13-year-olds and 32% of the 17-year-olds recognized that a location with the smallest degree of latitude will have the warmest climate. While the 13-year-old percentage represented a 7-percentage-point drop, 17-year-old performance on this item did not change from 1972 to 1976.

When asked whether industrialization of a country generally results in a movement of people from rural to urban parts of the country, 63% of the 13-year-olds and 77% of the 17-year-olds in 1976 correctly replied that it does. On this item, 13-year-olds' performance declined by 4 percentage points, while that of 17-year-olds did not change appreciably.

History

The topics included under history are somewhat limited. The major concentration is on significant events in U.S. history; a few questions focus upon aspects of world history and upon relating events in time.

Average results for 9- and 13-year-olds in this area remained about the same between assessments, but 17-year-olds' performance suffered approximately a 4-percentage-point decline. Table 3 displays average results and changes in performance for each age group.

Several items concerned the early history of the United States and the American Revolution. All age levels were asked to indicate which one of five European countries named had the most influence on the United States. Awareness that England had the most influence on the United States increased with age — 40% at age 9, 67% at age 13 and 76% at age 17 gave that response. Results at the two younger ages remained constant across assessments; 17-year-olds' performance dropped by about 5 percentage points.

Most 13- and 17-year-olds knew that the purpose of the Declaration of Independence was to declare the colonies free from Great

Britain. They had more difficulty with the question shown in Exhibit 3. Many felt that the American Revolution was fought to obtain religious freedom.

Seventeen-year-olds had some difficulty with more recent historical events. In 1976, 44% knew that the term "Cold War" was used to describe relations between the United States and the Soviet Union after 1945, a decline of 8 percentage points from their 1972 level of achievement. About a third of this age group could explain one of the purposes of the civil rights marches of the sixties. A higher percentage — 46% — could explain why this method of protest was used.

A question dealing with the relationship of events in time asked about the technology available to Columbus when he sailed the Atlantic. Nearly everyone at all three ages realized that Columbus could not have listened to the radio. Around 85% at all three age levels knew that Columbus could not have

TABLE 3. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on History Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 9 *(Number of items = 15)*	63.0%	64.1%	1.2
Age 13 *(Number of items = 24)*	65.9	64.7	-1.2
Age 17 *(Number of items = 28)*	70.7	66.9	-3.8*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.
††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 3. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Why Did the Colonies Rebel Against Great Britain?" Ages 13 and 17

Which one of the following is a reason that American colonies rebelled against Great Britain?

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
○ To abolish slavery	6.9%	1.8	4.1%	1.9*
○ To obtain more religious freedom	37.1	6.8*	29.9	2.2
○ To obtain the right to vote for all adults	6.4	3.1*	1.9	0.5
● To obtain more control over what they might produce or with whom they might trade	41.7	-7.9*	58.7	-6.6*
○ I don't know.	7.7	-4.1*	5.0	1.6*

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

traveled at 50 miles per hour. It is interesting to note that 17-year-olds did not do better than 9-year-olds on this question. Seventeen-year-olds were slightly less likely than 9- or 13-year-olds to realize that Columbus could have fired a gun — 62% and 63% of the 9- and 13-year-olds, respectively, answered correctly compared with 56% of the 17-year-olds.

An item about other nations asked 17-year-olds to explain why it has been difficult for African nations to achieve national unity. Slightly over two-fifths of the 17-year-olds gave an acceptable answer in the second assessment — a drop of 7 percentage points from 1972. The majority of acceptable responses mentioned either the language and cultural differences among African tribes — "because the tribes all have their own leaders, beliefs and languages" — or the lack of an established, stable government — "Many times governments are made up of different factions fighting one another."

Politics

The predominant topic assessed in this section was the structure and function of the U.S. government. Other topics touched upon were ways to find out about political candidates and knowledge of international political organizations. Many of the items summarized in this section are also included in the report *Changes in Political Knowledge and Attitudes, 1969—76.*[1]

Since there were very few items for 9-year-olds in this area, we will discuss only results for 13- and 17-year-olds. The younger teenagers did not show a significant change in performance, while the older teenagers declined by approximately 5 percentage points. Table 4 shows average performance and extents of change for the two teenaged groups.

As displayed in Exhibit 4, about two-fifths of the 13-year-olds and slightly over three-fifths of the 17-year-olds knew that the U.S. Supreme Court has the power to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional. While 13-year-olds' performance improved by 5 percentage points, that of 17-year-olds dropped by 11 points. Both groups improved on an item about the U.S. Department of State. In 1976, 37% of the 13-year-olds and 53% of the 17-year-olds recognized that the State Department — rather than the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Agriculture or Treasury — is most

[1] *Changes in Political Knowledge and Attitudes, 1969—76,* Report 07-CS-02, 1969—70 and 1976—77 Assessments (Denver, Colo.: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1978).

TABLE 4. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Political Knowledge Items: Ages 13 and 17

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 13 *(Number of items = 22)*	49.0%	47.6%	-1.3
Age 17 *(Number of items = 25)*	61.8	56.6	-5.2*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.

††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding

**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 4. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Which Body Declares Acts of Congress Unconstitutional?" Ages 13 and 17

Which one of the following has the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional?

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
○ The Congress	7.8%	-0.5	3.0%	-2.3*
○ The President	23.7	-0.4	19.7	9.6*
● The United States Supreme Court	39.9	5.1*	61.9	-10.8*
○ The United States Department of Justice	19.9	1.0	6.9	-0.5
○ I don't know.	8.2	-5.4*	8.1	3.7*

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

concerned with foreign affairs, an improvement of 11 percentage points for 13-year-olds and 14 percentage points for 17-year-olds.

Another question about the U.S. political process focused upon potential sources of information for voting decisions. Thirteen-year-olds' ability to identify two sources of information about candidates and their positions declined from 42% to 35%, while that of 17-year-olds was around 60% for both assessment years.

Around 60% of the 13-year-olds and 68% of the 17-year-olds knew that the United Nations is the name of the international peace-keeping organization established after the second World War. Thirteen-year-olds experienced a 7% drop in achievement; 17-year-olds' performance did not change appreciably.

Group Results

In addition to reporting national performance, National Assessment provides results for various groups within the national population. These groups are defined by region of the country, sex, race, size and type of community, and level of parental education (see Appendix for complete definitions of these groups). Mean performance levels on the knowledge items for each group for each assessment year are displayed in Exhibits 5, 6 and 7.

In these exhibits — one for each age level — the national mean percentage of success on the knowledge items for each assessment is indicated by the two horizontal lines across the graphs. Mean percentages for different groups are indicated as bars — the solid bars representing performance during the 1971—72 school year and the cross-hatched bars representing performance during the 1975—76 school year. The bars are displayed in six groups: the regions of the country (NE=Northeast, C=Central, W=West, SE=Southeast); sex (M=male, F=female); race (W=white, B=black, H=Hispanic); community type (ER=extreme rural, HM=high metropolitan, LM=low metropolitan); community size (BC=big city, FABC=fringes around big cities, MC=medium city, SP=smaller places); and level of parental education (PH=post high school, GH=graduated high school, NG=not graduated high school). Differences in percentages between the first and second assessments appear at the bottom of each bar; an

asterisk indicates that the difference was statistically significant at the .05 level. Because different sets of items were administered at each age level, mean-percentage graphs are not comparable across ages.

Group results can be examined in several ways. First, we can determine whether the achievement of each group — males, females, blacks, whites and so forth — went up or down over time. Second, we can consider the performance of each group relative to the nation. Third, we can compare the change in a group's performance over time to the change in the national performance level. These indicators should all be considered for an accurate picture of group performance.

As with item results, changes will be identified as differences only if they are statistically significant at the .05 level. When using the graphs in Exhibits 5, 6 and 7, it is important to remember that differences of similar size may or may not be statistically significant due to differences in the size of the sampling error for different groups and their relative levels of performance. Noteworthy differences are described in the following sections.

9-Year-Olds' Results

Average results for all 9-year-olds on the knowledge items displayed a slight, but not statistically significant, improvement between 1972 and 1976, and results for most of the groups followed a similar pattern (Exhibit 5).

Differences in regional performance at this age level were quite small. The performance of the Northeast was significantly above the nation in the first assessment, and the Southeast was significantly below it in the second assessment; otherwise, regional performance was not appreciably different from that of the entire nation. Changes in regional performance from 1972 to 1976 — like the change in national performance — were not statistically significant.

Males did better than females on the knowledge items in both 1972 and 1976. While both sexes showed an improvement between assessments, the improvement for females was statistically significant but that for males was not.

Nine-year-old blacks and Hispanics showed greater improvements than did their white counterparts. However, performance of both these groups remained lower than that of whites — with 12 percentage points separating blacks and whites and 9 percentage points between Hispanic and white performances.

Of the size-and-type-of-community groups, only the low-metropolitan and big-city groups displayed gains larger than that of the entire 9-year-old population.

Children with parents having higher levels of education showed higher achievement, while those whose parents had less education performed less well. The differences in achievement of the parental-education groups were much the same in both assessments, and changes in group performance were very similar to that of the nation.

13-Year-Olds' Results

In most instances, the patterns seen at age 9 also held for 13-year-olds (Exhibit 6).

Regional differences were slightly larger for 13-year-olds than for 9-year-olds. In 1976, the Northeastern and Central regions performed significantly better than the nation, while the West and the Southeast were significantly below it. Only the Central region showed a change between assessments different from that of the nation — tending to improve, while the nation tended to decline.

As at age 9, male 13-year-olds performed better than females in both assessment years on the knowledge items. Both sexes showed about the same rate of decline.

Blacks and Hispanics at age 13 achieved below the white level. However, at this age level, all three racial groups had virtually

EXHIBIT 5. Mean Performance for 9-Year-Olds on Knowledge Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 29)

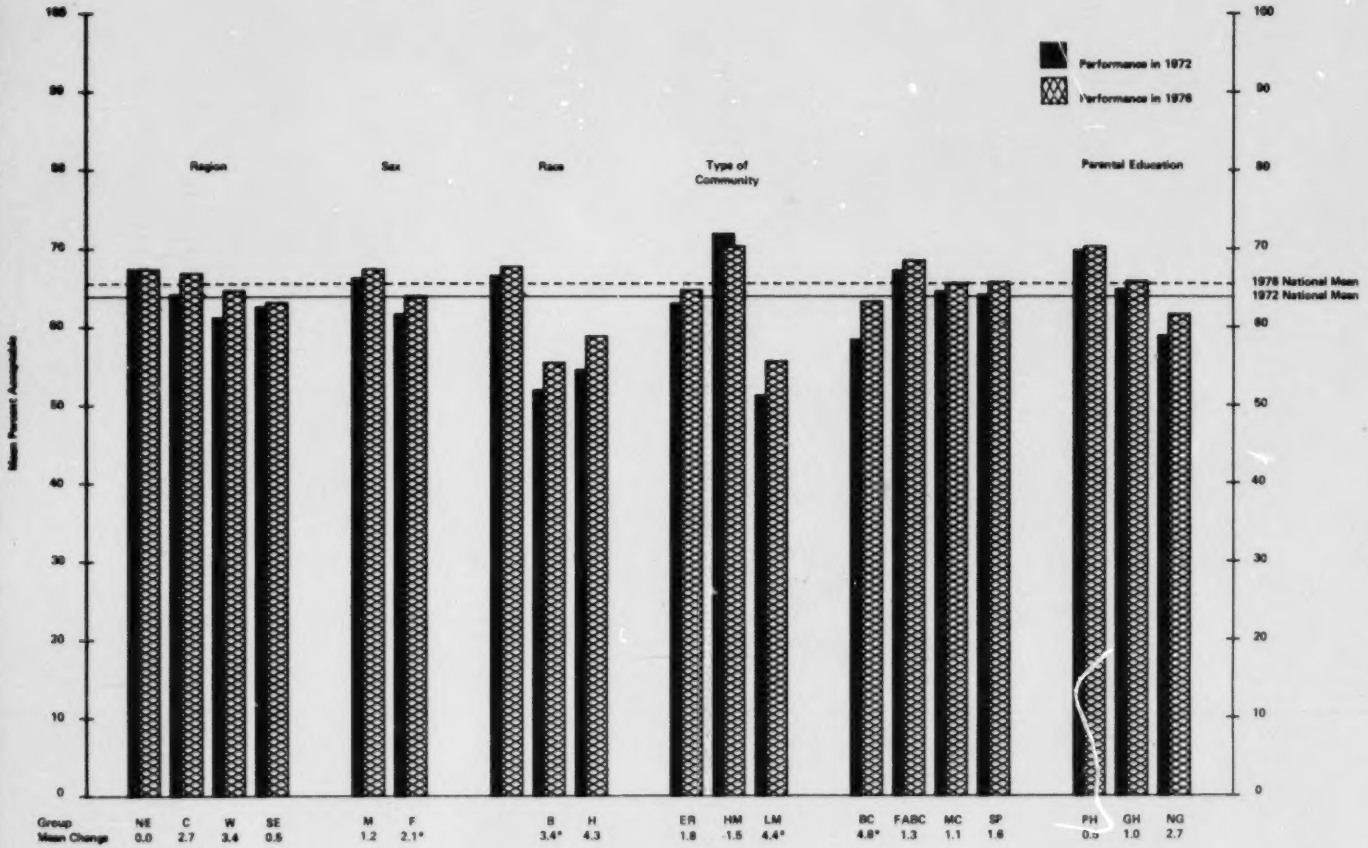


EXHIBIT 6. Mean Performance for 13-Year-Olds on Knowledge Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 54)

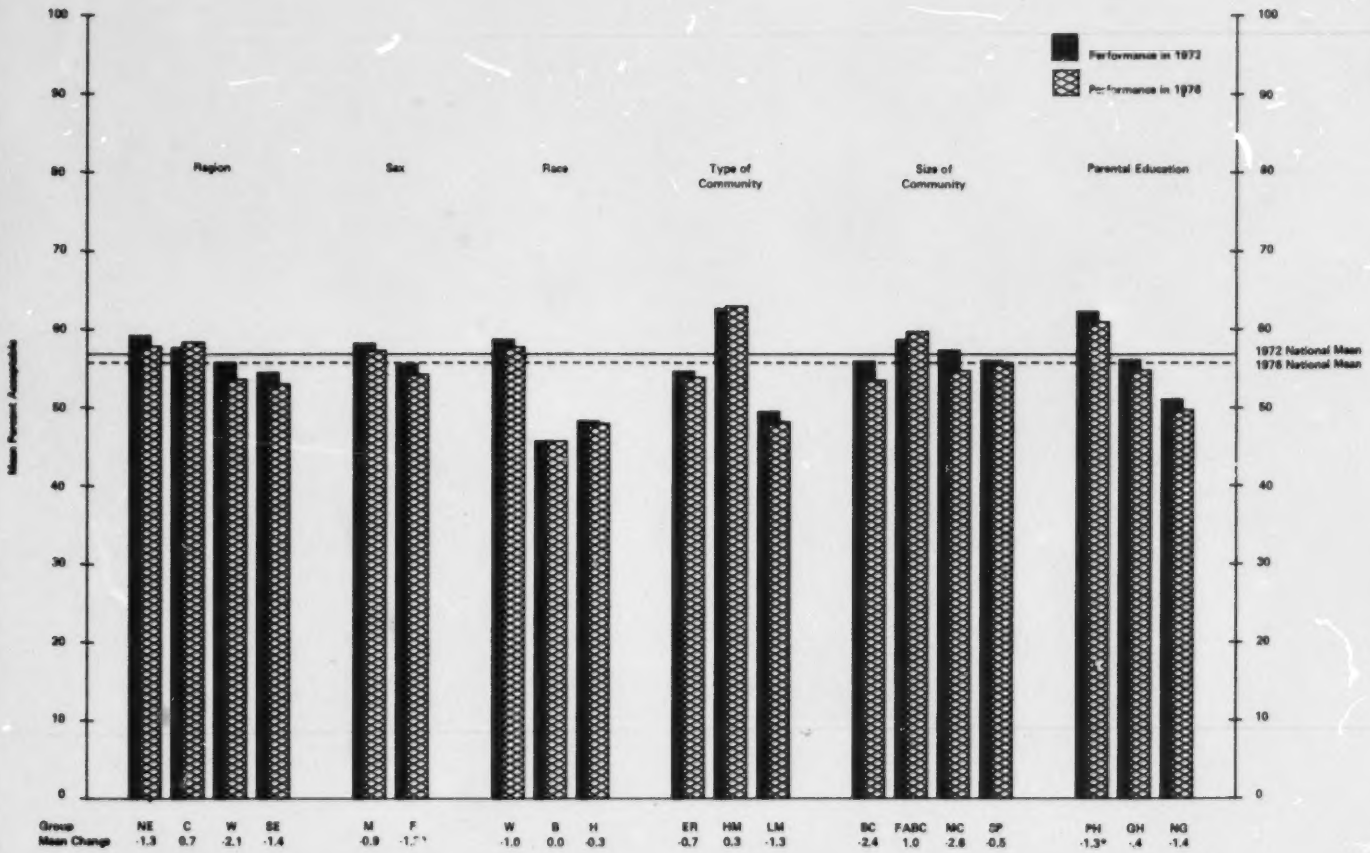
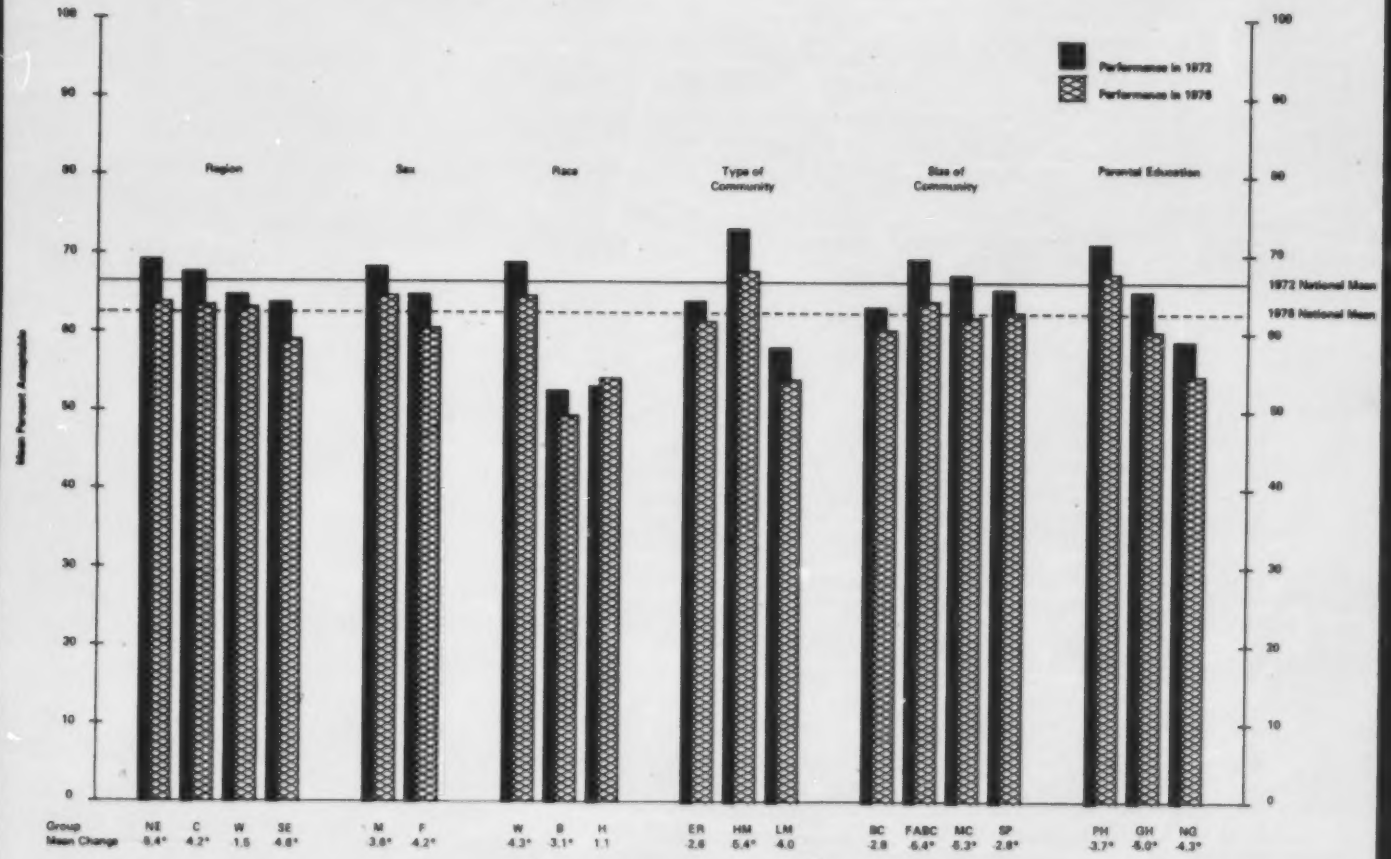


EXHIBIT 7. Mean Performance for 17-Year-Olds on Knowledge Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 59)



identical changes in performance, while at age 9, blacks and Hispanics showed a greater improvement than whites.

The pattern of performance for the type-of-community groups was the same as at age 9: students living in high-metropolitan communities had the highest results; students in low-metropolitan communities did least well; and students from extreme-rural communities performed about at the level of the nation as a whole. The improvement in low-metropolitan performance compared to national performance seen at age 9 was not evident for 13-year-olds. The general pattern of achievement for the four community-size groups was the same for both ages; however, the improvement in big-city performance for 9-year-olds was not apparent for 13-year-olds.

Relative performance of the various parental-education groups was essentially the same as that displayed by 9-year-olds.

17-Year-Olds' Results

As displayed in Exhibit 7, there were only a few exceptions to the general decline in 17-year-olds' achievement on the knowledge items. One such exception occurred for the Western region of the country, which declined less than the other three regions and thus improved its position relative to the nation as a whole. The Southeast remained below the nation in the 1976 assessment, while differences between the nation and the other two regions were very slight.

Following the same trend as the younger ages, 17-year-old males did better on social studies knowledge items than 17-year-old females did. Both sexes declined at about the same rate. Blacks and Hispanics displayed lower achievement levels than whites, but, contrary to this age group's overall trend, Hispanic performance did not decline between 1972 and 1976.

The type-of-community, size-of-community and parental-education groups follow much the same pattern as at the younger ages; changes in group performance between assessment years closely resemble the change in national performance.

CHAPTER 2

SKILLS

Skills are needed to broaden one's realm of knowledge — to obtain information and to interpret the information obtained. Among the important questions addressed by the social studies assessments is whether or not young Americans have mastered some of the skills considered crucial by social studies educators.

For the purpose of the assessment, skills were divided into the two topics of obtaining information and interpreting information. Objectives under obtaining information included willingness to raise questions and seek answers, knowledge of sources of particular kinds of information and ability to use standard reference sources. Interpretive skills involved the ability to use maps and graphs and the ability to use problem-solving techniques of the social sciences — for example, distinguishing fact from opinion, recognizing simple logical errors, identifying problems and issues, and using nontraditional sources of information.

Highlights of the Results

Between 1972 and 1976, average results for items assessing social studies skills showed:

- No significant change for 9-year-olds.
- A significant decline for 13-year-olds.
- A significant decline for 17-year-olds.

Average performance on the skills items and changes in performance appear in Table 5.

Note that on this set of items declines for

TABLE 5. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Social Studies Skills Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 9 *(Number of items = 28)*	63.9%	65.2%	1.3
Age 13 *(Number of items = 38)*	63.4	61.4	-2.0*
Age 17 *(Number of items = 32)*	76.1	73.6	-2.4*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.
††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

13- and 17-year-olds were fairly similar, whereas on the knowledge items the decline for 17-year-olds was considerably larger than that for 13-year-olds. Thirteen-year-olds showed a larger decrease between assessments on the skills than the knowledge items, while for 17-year-olds the reverse appeared to be true.

Obtaining Information

Objectives for information-obtaining skills included not only a knowledge of where and how to seek information, but also the ability to raise questions and seek answers.

Average results and changes in performance for 9- and 13-year-olds appear in Table 6. There were only a few items of this type for 17-year-olds; on those items, 17-year-olds showed a tendency to decline.

As an indication of their ability to raise meaningful questions about public affairs, teenagers were asked to formulate two questions to ask a politician running for a certain office. Seventy-two percent of the 13-year-olds and 82% of the 17-year-olds formulated two reasonable questions in 1976. Thirteen-year-olds' results did not change appreciably between assessments, while those for 17-year-olds went down by 6 percentage points.

Most of the questions about identifying sources for particular information were directed to the younger age levels. The item displayed in Exhibit 8 is a typical item for 9-year-olds on information sources.

On several similar items, about 78% recognized a situation in which a map would be an appropriate source of information; 96% recognized a situation in which a newspaper would be needed; and 78% recognized a situation in which an encyclopedia would provide the needed information. Percentages of success on these three items did not change appreciably between assessments.

Thirteen- and 17-year-olds responded to the item shown in Exhibit 9.

TABLE 6. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Obtaining Information Items: Ages 9 and 13

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance
Age 9 *(Number of items = 17)*	64.1%	64.8%	0.7
Age 13 *(Number of items = 13)*	57.1	53.9	-3.2*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 8. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is Used to Find Correct Spelling?" Age 9

Which one of the following would be BEST to use to find how to spell a word?

	1976 Performance†	Change
● A dictionary	88.1%	-3.0*
○ An encyclopedia	7.7	2.0*
○ A globe	1.2	0.7
○ A map	1.4	0.7
○ A newspaper	0.7	0.0
○ I don't know.	0.6	-0.3

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 9. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Source Would You Use to Locate an Article?" Ages 13 and 17

Suppose you want to find a recent magazine article about Mrs. Marie Bancroft Weaver, a woman who has said that she would like to run for the presidency. Which one of the following sources would you use to locate the article?

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
○ Time	43.5%	-2.8	40.0%	3.5
○ The World Almanac	8.7	-0.8	4.3	0.1
○ The World Book Encyclopedia	9.2	2.9*	2.2	0.4
● The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature	33.0	0.7	49.0	-5.0*
○ I don't know.	5.5	0.2	4.5	1.1

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

About a third of the younger teenagers and half the older group correctly identified the *Readers' Guide* as a way to locate an article. A large number at each age selected *Time* — perhaps because it was the only magazine listed, or perhaps because they assumed that anything of importance would eventually turn up in *Time*.

How well do students use sources of information once they have been identified? Nine-year-olds were shown a sample table of contents and then asked to respond to several questions (Exhibit 10).

EXHIBIT 10. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Using a Table of Contents," Age 9

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction . . . iii

IN THE CITY

Who lives in a city? . . . 2
The stores . . . 3
Let's go to the library . . . 5
The park . . . 6
Five-thirty traffic . . . 8
Streets and bridges . . . 11
How a city gets water . . . 15
City helpers . . . 17

ON THE FARM

Who lives on a farm? . . . 28
Farm animals . . . 29
Growing food . . . 33
Playing in the forest . . . 38
The school bus . . . 40
Let's go for a swim . . . 45
A fire! . . . 47
Farm helpers . . . 51

Use the Table of Contents to answer these questions.

A. On what page would you look to find out about firemen in the city?

	1976 Performance	Change
(Page 17)	44.5%	8.8*

B. On what page would you look to find out about the way children get from the farm to school?

(Page 40)	71.5	4.1*

C. On what page would you look to find out about where to shop in the city?

(Page 3)	78.5	-0.7

D. On what page would you look to find out whether farms still have horses?

(Page 29)	76.1	3.0*

**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Children had more difficulty with the first question, perhaps being distracted by the alternative "A fire!" listed under "ON THE FARM"; however, on the other questions, their performance was between 70% and 80% correct. On all these questions, performance either stayed the same or improved between assessments.

Thirteen- and 17-year-olds were asked to use a book index to locate information. Seventeen-year-olds' performance was considerably better than that of 13-year-olds — on the five pieces of information to be located, 13-year-olds' percentages of success ranged from 43% to 78%, while 17-year-olds' performance was between 70% and 91%. Performance either remained the same or declined on these questions.

Interpreting Information

Many of the items categorized under interpreting information concerned the use of thinking skills and problem-solving techniques to understand information.

As displayed in Table 7, 9-year-olds' performance on items concerned with interpreting information improved significantly between 1972 and 1976. This was the only set of items on which 9-year-olds showed a significant increase. Results for 13- and 17-year-olds declined on these skills; however, the decline for 13-year-olds appeared smaller than their decline on items concerned with obtaining information.

Improvements occurred on several items involving the topics of race, religion or nationality. Respondents at all three ages were asked to describe the meaning of the picture of crossed hands and the accompanying poem shown in Exhibit 11. Each hand in the picture was a different color — one red, one yellow, one black and one white. Acceptable responses could be quite simple — "peace," "brotherhood" or "freedom for all" were considered satisfactory answers. Nine-year-olds' responses tended to focus upon friendship, brotherhood, love or peace. As one 9-year-old said, "You can be any color to make a friend."

Sixty-two percent of the 9-year-olds wrote acceptable responses — an improvement of 14 percentage points from 1972. Thirteen-year-olds were more likely to mention the concepts of the brotherhood of man, together-

TABLE 7. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Interpreting Information Items: Ages 9, 13 and 17

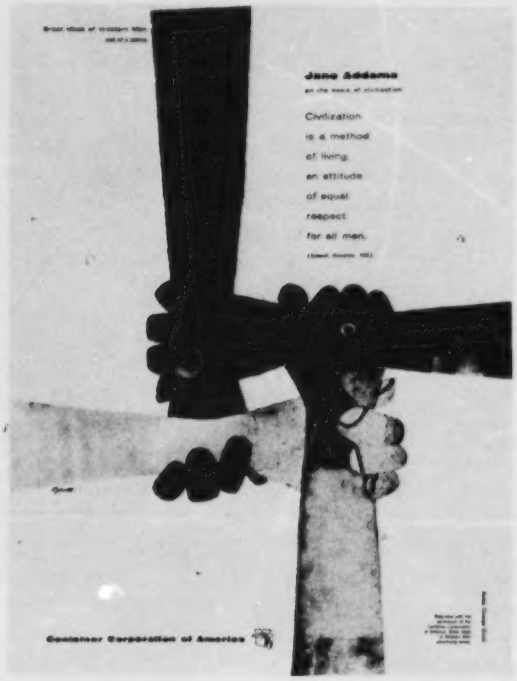
	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 9 *(Number of items = 11)*	63.6%	65.9%	2.3*
Age 13 *(Number of items = 25)*	66.6	65.3	-1.4*
Age 17 *(Number of items = 25)*	79.2	77.2	-2.0*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.

††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding.

**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 11. Item "What Is the Picture of the Crossed Hands Meant to Show?" Ages 9, 13 and 17



Look at the picture and quotation. What do you think the picture is meant to show?

ness or friendship among races, or equal treatment for all; their performance improved by 13 percentage points, to 90% in 1976. Seventeen-year-olds tended to give answers related to the brotherhood of man or togetherness regardless of race or color. Ninety-five percent of them gave acceptable responses, representing no change from the previous assessment.

A series of questions asked respondents to indicate whether a given statement either could be proved (for example, whether the United States is larger than Mexico) or could not be proved (for example, whether Arabs are nicer than Norwegians). Percentages of success generally improved at each age in recognizing that statements concerning the relative merits of religions or nationalities could not be proved. Youngsters at all age levels did quite well in identifying the two statements that could be proved.

Skills in the use of different problem-solving techniques varied considerably. Nine-year-olds improved between assessments on the problem of simple logic displayed in Exhibit 12, with about 80% of them completing the question successfully in 1976.

EXHIBIT 12. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Which State Is Smaller?" Age 9

There are some things we know about the United States.

Texas is a LARGE state.
Colorado and Kansas are MEDIUM-SIZED states.
Massachusetts is a SMALL state.

Using the above information, decide if the following sentence is "True" or "Not true."

Colorado is smaller than Massachusetts.

	1976 Performance†	Change
○ True	16.7%	-3.0
● Not true	79.6	8.3*
○ I don't know.	3.6	-5.2*

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Many teenagers could determine which one of a series of statements was not supported by a given paragraph, and the number who could did not change appreciably between assessments. But they declined slightly in their ability to separate fact from opinion in a series of statements about Alaskan history.

Seventeen-year-olds had difficulty with an item that asked them to identify and define the central problem being discussed by a group of speakers (Exhibit 13).

EXHIBIT 13. Item "What Is the Central Problem Being Discussed?" Age 17

Below is a conversation that four speakers had about Mr. Jones, a Congressman. Try to decide what the central problem is that is being discussed.

Speaker I: Jones has stated he has no faith in his party's platform. Moreover, he has voted against many of his party's bills in Congress even though he was elected on his party's ticket. He's a traitor to the party and won't get my vote again.

Speaker II: Your judgment is too harsh. There have been many instances when congressmen from both parties have failed to follow party leadership. Jones is a traitor to his party only if he refuses to support his party's presidential candidate.

Speaker III: That is no defense. If Jones was elected to his party's ticket, he is obligated to support his party.

Speaker IV: I cannot agree. Each congressman must do what his conscience, not what his party's leadership, tells him to do.

What is the CENTRAL problem that is being discussed by the speakers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Close to 30% of the 17-year-olds gave acceptable responses, a decline of 6 percentage points from the 1972 assessment. Acceptable answers were placed in the four acceptable categories shown in Exhibit 14. These response categories are hierarchical, with the first category being the preferred response. Those responding in the first category displayed the most ability in forming generalizations; responses in categories two through four become increasingly specific to the particular situation given. Very few of the 17-year-olds responded in the first category — most acceptable answers tended to respond to the particular situation. Also noteworthy are the percentage merely describing the situation and the percentage giving vague or nonsensical answers.

A similar item presented students with the views of four speakers and asked them to select the speaker whose opinion was based more on facts than on personal feelings. About three-quarters of the 13-year-olds and close to 90% of the 17-year-olds identified the correct speaker. While 13-year-olds' performance did not change between assessments, that of 17-year-olds dropped by approximately 3 percentage points.

Often, information about the social sciences is conveyed graphically rather than verbally. Ability to interpret graphs varied widely, depending on the type of graph used and the information to be obtained. In using the line graph shown in Exhibit 15, about the same percentages in each assessment — approximately half of the younger teenagers and slightly over three-fourths of the older group — found the correct difference between the highest and lowest average temperatures.

Percentages of success for 13- and 17-year-olds were fairly high and remained constant across assessments for two other items involving interpreting information on graphs, one requiring the use of a line graph and the other the use of a bar graph. However, students did not appear to consult graph labels to determine whether a graph provided the information they needed. On one item, the graph was

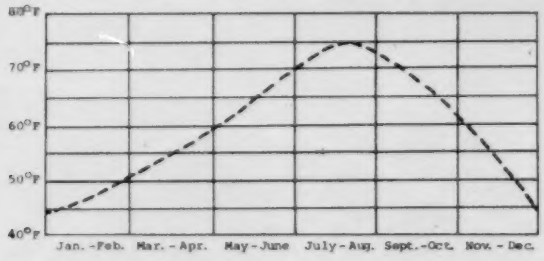
EXHIBIT 14. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is the Central Problem Involving Congressman Jones?" Age 17

Acceptable Categories	1976 Performance	Change
1. Generalizes beyond this situation to the issue of elected officials supporting a party platform versus following their own beliefs.	3.5%	-3.7*
2. States both sides of the issues as a dilemma Mr. Jones is facing.	3.5	-2.0*
3. Describes fact that Mr. Jones did not support his party or that he followed his own beliefs.	6.4	-0.7
4. Focuses on how much autonomy Jones (or any elected official) should have – doesn't mention issue of supporting party versus personal beliefs. Concerned with duty or obligation to party.	15.8	0.0
Unacceptable Categories		
Vague or nonsensical replies	31.5	2.2
Describes Jones' actions only	27.4	4.2*
Describes speakers' disagreement with Jones	7.9	1.2
I don't know	2.0	-2.3*

**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

EXHIBIT 15. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "What Is the Difference Between Highest and Lowest Average Temperatures Shown on Graph?" Ages 13 and 17

Look at the graph, then answer the question below it.



Average Monthly Temperature of Maypole, U.S.A.

What is the difference between the highest and lowest average temperatures of Maypole, U.S.A.?

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
○ 22° F	4.8%	0.6	3.5%	0.2
● 31° F	50.8	-2.3	77.2	1.7
○ 44° F	14.5	2.4*	5.7	-2.6*
○ 75° F	21.3	0.5	7.5	0.5
○ I don't know.	7.7	-1.9	5.6	-0.3

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

labeled "Passenger Car Use in the United States," but the question asked about money used to build and improve roads. Many students simply looked at the graph — not at its title and axis labels — and assumed that the graph showed the needed data. Thirty-six percent at age 13 and 64% at age 17 answered this item successfully — a decline of 8 percentage points for the 13-year-olds and 6 percentage points for the 17-year-olds.

Seventeen-year-olds were better able than 13-year-olds to use longitude and latitude to locate a continent on a world map. This task was complicated by the fact that the continents were not named on the map, so one had to know both the location of the continent and how to use latitude and longitude. Twenty-three percent of the 13-year-olds and 39% of the 17-year-olds answered correctly, achievement levels not significantly different from those of 1972 for either age group.

Group Results

Exhibits 16 through 18 display average performance on the skills items for each group at ages 9, 13 and 17.

9-Year-Olds' Results

As displayed in Exhibit 16, 9-year-olds' performance improved slightly from 1972 to 1976; however, this improvement was not statistically significant. Regional performance showed some variation from that of the nation — the Northeastern and Central regions generally performed above the national mean, the West was close to the national level and the Southeast was below it. None of the changes in regional performance between assessments were significant.

Male and female performance on all skills items at age 9 was virtually identical and changes were not significant. When skills items are separated into obtaining information and interpreting information, males and females performed similarly in obtaining information, but females improved considerably more than males in interpreting information.

Blacks — although still below white achievement levels — displayed a significant gain, while whites and Hispanics did not. Black improvement appeared considerably larger than that for whites and somewhat greater than that for Hispanics on items about interpreting information; on items about obtaining information, performance did not change appreciably between assessments for any of the three racial groups.

In both the 1972 and 1976 assessments, the extreme-rural group was fairly close to the national level, the high-metropolitan group was above the national mean and the low-metropolitan group was below it. The extreme-rural group showed a significant improvement, while the other two groups did not.

Big cities also displayed a significant improvement. The fringes-around-big-cities group did better than the nation as a whole; the other two community-size groups were close to the achievement level of the entire nation.

Achievement became higher with an increased parental-education level. Changes between assessments for these groups were not appreciably different from that of the nation.

13-Year-Olds' Results

Skills achievement for 13-year-olds declined significantly; all groups did not follow this pattern, however (Exhibit 17). For instance, only the Northeastern region declined significantly — the drop for the other regions was not significant. The same pattern as at the 9-year-old level was evident here: the Northeastern and Central regions performed better than the nation as a whole, the West was about at the national level and the Southeast was below it.

In the first assessment, male and female

EXHIBIT 16. Mean Performance for 9-Year-Olds on Skills Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 28)

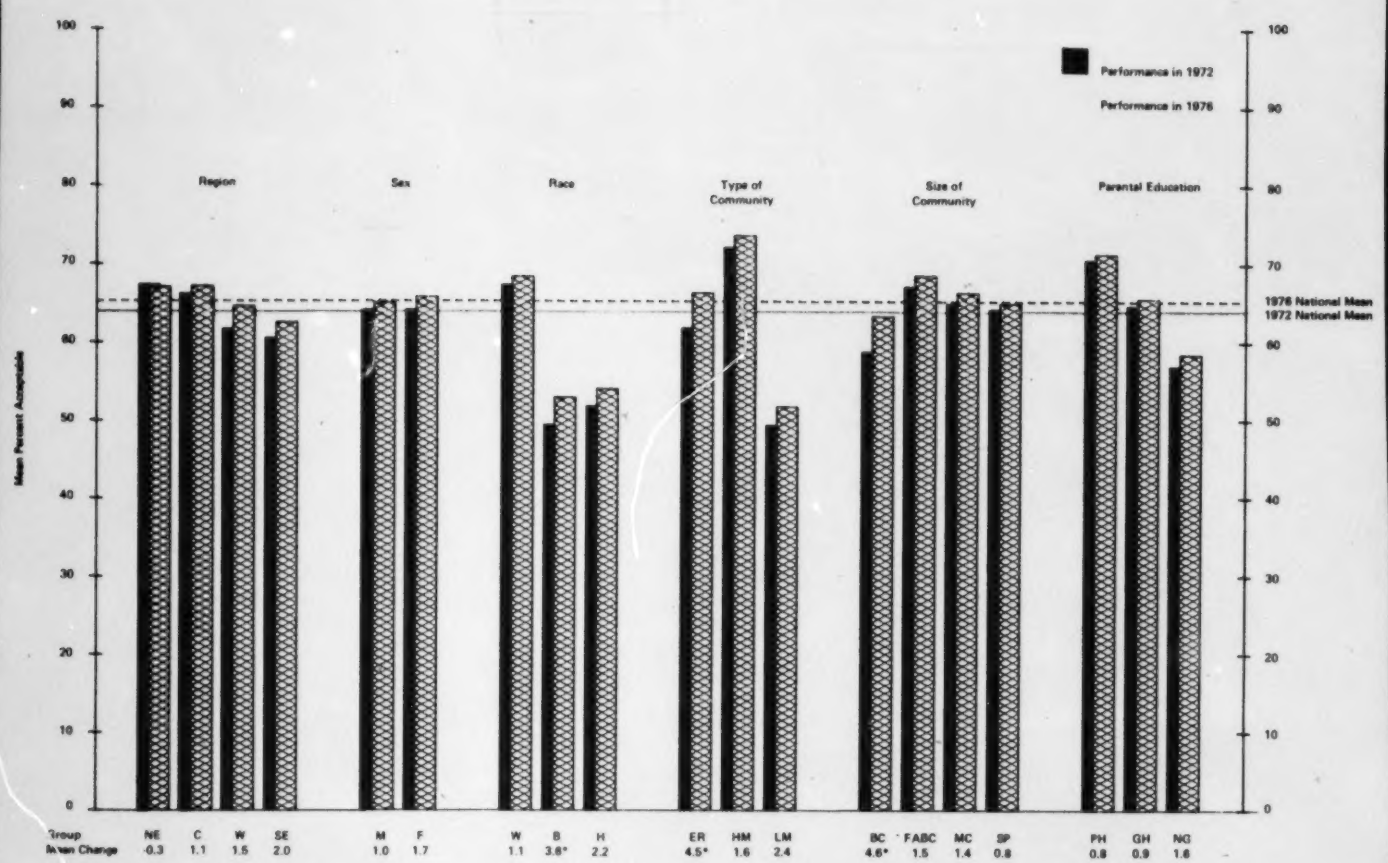


EXHIBIT 17. Mean Performance for 13-Year-Olds on Skills Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 38)

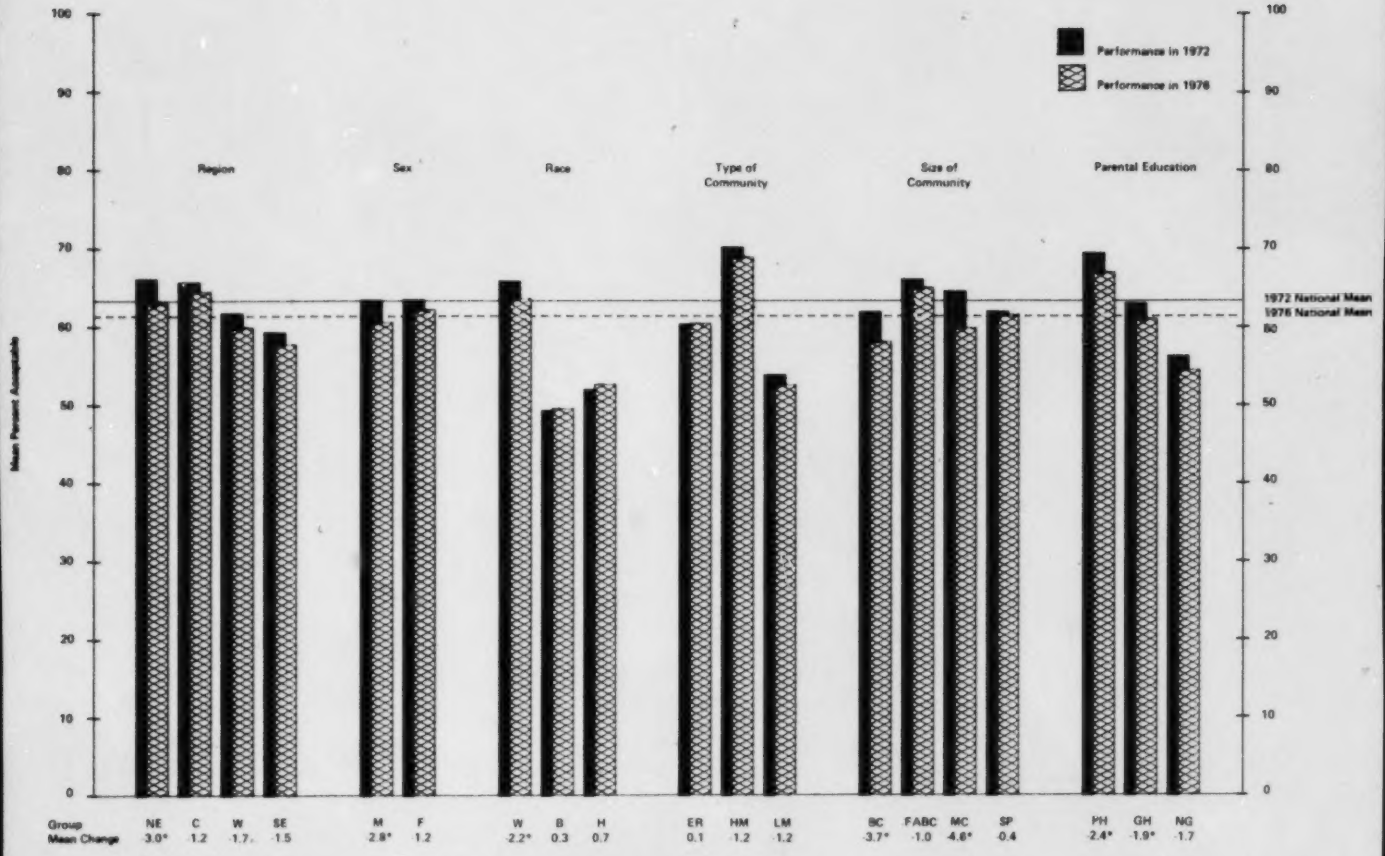
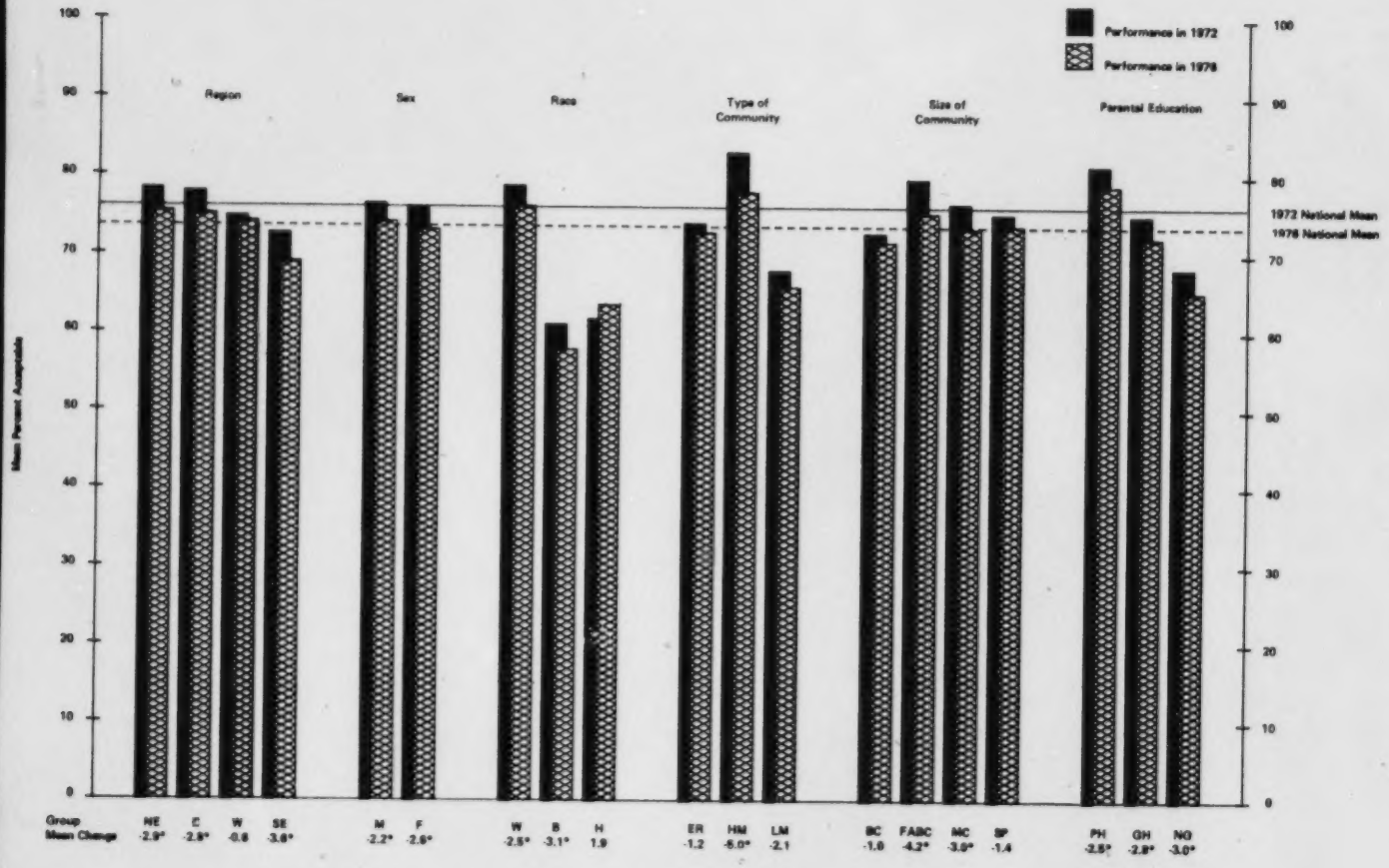


EXHIBIT 18. Mean Performance for 17-Year-Olds on Skills Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 32)



13-year-olds' performances were identical, but the drop in male performance between assessments was greater than that for females. By 1976, females performed above the national level while males were below it.

Similar to the nation as a whole, whites showed a significant decline. Blacks and Hispanics, while performing at a lower-achievement level than whites, did not show such a decline.

None of the community-type groups showed significant declines — in fact, as at age 9, the extreme-rural group displayed a tendency to improve in comparison with the change in national performance.

Two community-size groups showed significant decreases — big cities and medium cities. Parental-education groups tended to decline at about the same rate as the entire nation.

17-Year-Olds' Results

Seventeen-year-olds' achievement on the skills items declined significantly, and this decline was reflected in results for most of the groups assessed (Exhibit 18). Western 17-year-olds declined less than the other three regions, as was also the case on the knowledge items.

Male and female performances at this age level were very similar, and both groups declined at a rate very close to that of the nation as a whole.

For this age group, blacks and whites showed about the same amount of decline; however, the change in Hispanic performance, while not significant, tended toward an improvement.

As displayed in Exhibit 18, the decline in high-metropolitan performance was greater than for the other two community-type groups. Performance of this group also dropped relative to the national level, becoming closer to the nation in the second assessment.

Fringes-around-big-cities and medium-city groups showed significant decreases in performance — big cities and smaller places did not. Parental-education groups followed the same pattern seen for the younger age groups; at age 17, all three of these groups declined at about the same rate as the nation as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

ATTITUDES

Aithough the attitudes held by the nation's young people are important to the future of our democratic society, there is considerable controversy over what attitudes should be encouraged, what teaching methods should be used and who is responsible for education in this area. Some believe that the traditional values of the society should be taught by the schools; others feel that the schools should assist students in discovering their own values; still others think that attitudes should be the responsibility of the home and the larger society, not the schools.

The National Assessment social studies objectives[1] include the following goals related to attitudes: have curiosity about human affairs and have a reasoned commitment to the values that sustain a free society. Subobjectives under the second of these goals include a belief in the worth of the individual, a belief in First Amendment rights, a belief in the rule of law, a belief in open opportunity for advancement and a willingness to participate in decision making related to one's own life. These objectives, developed through a consensus of groups of consultants, reflect informed judgments on the part of many social studies educators, experts in the field of social studies and concerned lay persons about the skills, knowledge and attitudes in the social studies that are desirable for young people to acquire.

National Assessment items in the attitudes area are designed to measure how well young people are meeting the goals outlined above. When we say that performance improved or declined in the attitudes area, we simply mean that more or fewer people now than previously are fulfilling the objectives in this area, as measured by National Assessment items. Many of these items are displayed in this chapter so the reader can have a more complete picture of the way in which National Assessment evaluated student attitudes.

Since there were not enough items measuring each objective and subobjective to make reporting by objectives feasible, the attitudes area was divided into two topics for reporting purposes: the first concerning support for the rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, the second involving belief in the worth of the individual and willingness to participate in school and community affairs. Items measuring attitudes are also discussed in the report *Changes in Political Knowledge and Attitudes, 1969—76* (available from National Assessment) since the attitudinal items in the social studies assessment addressed mainly political topics.

Highlights of the Results

Results for the two older ages in the attitudes area showed:

- Fewer 13-year-olds expressed support for constitutional rights and a belief in the worth of the individual in 1976 than in 1972.
- Fewer 17-year-olds expressed support for constitutional rights and a belief in the worth of the individual in 1976 than in 1972.

[1] *Social Studies Objectives*, 1971—72 Assessment (Denver, Colo.: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1970).

TABLE 8. Average Performance, 1972 and 1976, and Changes in Performance on Attitude Items: Ages 13 and 17

	1972 Performance	1976 Performance†	Change From 1972 Performance††
Age 13 *(Number of items = 11)*	69.7%	67.8%	-1.9*
Age 17 *(Number of items = 14)*	79.3	77.6	-1.8*

†Averages for different age levels should not be compared since they are computed using different sets of items.
††Since results in data tables have been rounded to one decimal place, figures may not total due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

There were relatively few items for 9-year-olds in this area, and all dealt with belief in the worth of the individual; slightly fewer 9-year-olds expressed belief in the worth of the individual on these items.

Table 8 displays average performance and changes in performance on the attitude items for 13- and 17-year-olds. The declines for 13- and 17-year-olds were very similar.

Results for Selected Attitudes Items

Questions about constitutional rights were geared to measure attitudes toward these rights and not knowledge of them — asking whether individuals should be able to do certain things, not whether in fact they are allowed to do them.

Several items were concerned with freedom of the press. Thirteen- and 17-year-olds responded to the question shown in Exhibit 19. A little over half the 13-year-olds and about two-thirds of the 17-year-olds believed that the press should be allowed to publish criticism of a public official. Five percent more of the 13-year-olds expressed this belief in 1976; 9% fewer of the 17-year-olds did so.

EXHIBIT 19. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Should Newspapers and Magazines Be Allowed to Publish Criticism?" Ages 13 and 17

Should a newspaper or magazine be allowed to publish something that criticizes an elected government official?

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
● Yes	53.7%	4.8*	66.7%	-8.7*
○ No	27.3	-11.0*	15.3	1.2
○ Undecided	18.9	6.4*	17.2	6.8*

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Seventeen-year-olds' performance also declined on a second item about freedom of the press. When asked if libraries should have books arguing against democracy, 81% in 1976 marked "yes" — 8% fewer than in 1972. A slightly smaller percentage — 75% in 1976 — wrote an acceptable reason *why* libraries should be permitted to have such books.

On a third question, regarding publication of mistakes of governmental officials, percentages for 17-year-olds did not change significantly between assessments. Sixty percent both supported this freedom of the press and gave at least one satisfactory reason for their support.

More 17-year-olds than 13-year-olds felt that a person who does not believe in God should be allowed to express this view publicly — just over 75% of the 17-year-olds held that belief, compared with 60% of the 13-year-olds. Changes from the previous assessment were not significant at either age level.

Thirteen-year-olds showed less willingness in 1976 than 1972 to have an atheist hold public office, declining 10 percentage points to 49%. About two-thirds of the 17-year-olds supported the right of an atheist to hold public office, a figure that did not change between assessments.

The majority of teenagers thought that younger people should have the right to write letters to governmental officials or to express political opinions. In 1976, 76% at age 13 and 88% at age 17 supported this right; 13-year-olds' percentages improved by 4 percentage points, while 17-year-olds' performance did not change. But fewer 17-year-olds in 1976 than in 1972 felt that teenagers should have the same legal rights as adults. The percentage supporting such rights declined by 5 percentage points, to 84% in 1976. Seventeen-year-olds showed an increase in their support of the right to petition — 87% felt this right should exist, an increase of 5 percentage points from 1972.

As displayed in Exhibit 20, both 13- and 17-year-olds seemed to support the application of fair trial procedures — 77% of the 13-year-olds and 85% of the 17-year-olds

EXHIBIT 20. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Should an Accused Person Be Punished Immediately?" Ages 13 and 17

A. During the time when the western United States was being settled, a person accused of a crime was sometimes punished immediately by those who accused him. Do you think this was the right way to deal with him?

	Age 13		Age 17	
	1976 Performance†	Change	1976 Performance†	Change
○ Yes	5.8%	0.2	4.6%	0.1
● No	86.2	0.0	90.5	1.3
○ Undecided	7.8	0.0	4.7	-1.5

B. Please give a reason for any answer you selected.

(Percentage answering "no" to A and giving an acceptable reason.)	76.6%	2.1	85.3%	0.1

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.

responded "no" to the first question and gave an acceptable reason for that answer. Acceptable responses included the idea that a trial should be used, that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, that one should have a chance to defend oneself and that evidence is needed before punishment is administered.

What are young peoples' attitudes toward others? Are they willing to participate in school and community affairs?

Nine-year-olds were asked if they would be willing to participate in five typical classroom decisions — for example, deciding on games to play at recess, topics for reports or destinations for field trips. Percentages willing to participate ranged from approximately 70 to 85% for various situations, and these percentages did not change significantly for any situation.

Most teenagers felt that they should have a voice in deciding what courses would be offered by their school system. Eighty-four percent at age 13 and 91% at age 17 stated that they should have such a voice. Thirteen-year-olds' achievement did not change, while that of 17-year-olds dropped about 3 percentage points between assessments.

Nearly all 9-year-olds (95%) said that they would help a hurt friend, even if it meant they would be late to school. This percentage represented a 2-percentage-point decline from the first assessment.

Seventeen-year-olds responded to the hypothetical situation described in Exhibit 21. The proportion of 17-year-olds who said they would report vandalism to the police dropped 7 percentage points between 1972 and 1976; the percentage giving an acceptable reason for their answer went down by 5 percentage points. About half of the "acceptable" responses included preventing further crime, doing one's duty as a citizen and, if one responded "no" to the first question, notifying someone other than the police.

EXHIBIT 21. Percentages of Response and Changes in Percentages for Item "Report Vandalism" Age 17

A. Suppose you see a stranger slashing the tires of a car. Would you report and describe that person to the police?

	1976 Performance†	Change
○ Yes	67.2%	-7.2*
○ No	10.4	-3.4*
○ Undecided	21.9	10.3*

B. Please give a reason for your answer.

_____

_____

(Percentage giving an acceptable reason.)	64.7%	-5.3*

†Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.
**Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Group Results

Exhibits 22 through 24 display average performance on the attitudes items for each group at ages 9, 13 and 17. As in the first two chapters, changes that appear on the graphs may or may not be statistically significant depending on the sampling error for the groups involved. Group patterns of achievement that differ either from the national pattern or that of other groups will be discussed in the text.

9-Year-Olds' Results

Exhibit 22 shows that nationally 9-year-olds' achievement on attitude items declined slightly. Among the regions, only the Southeast experienced a significant decline. The Southeast also declined relative to the national level, while the West improved relative to that level.

EXHIBIT 22. Mean Performance for 9-Year-Olds on Attitude Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 9)

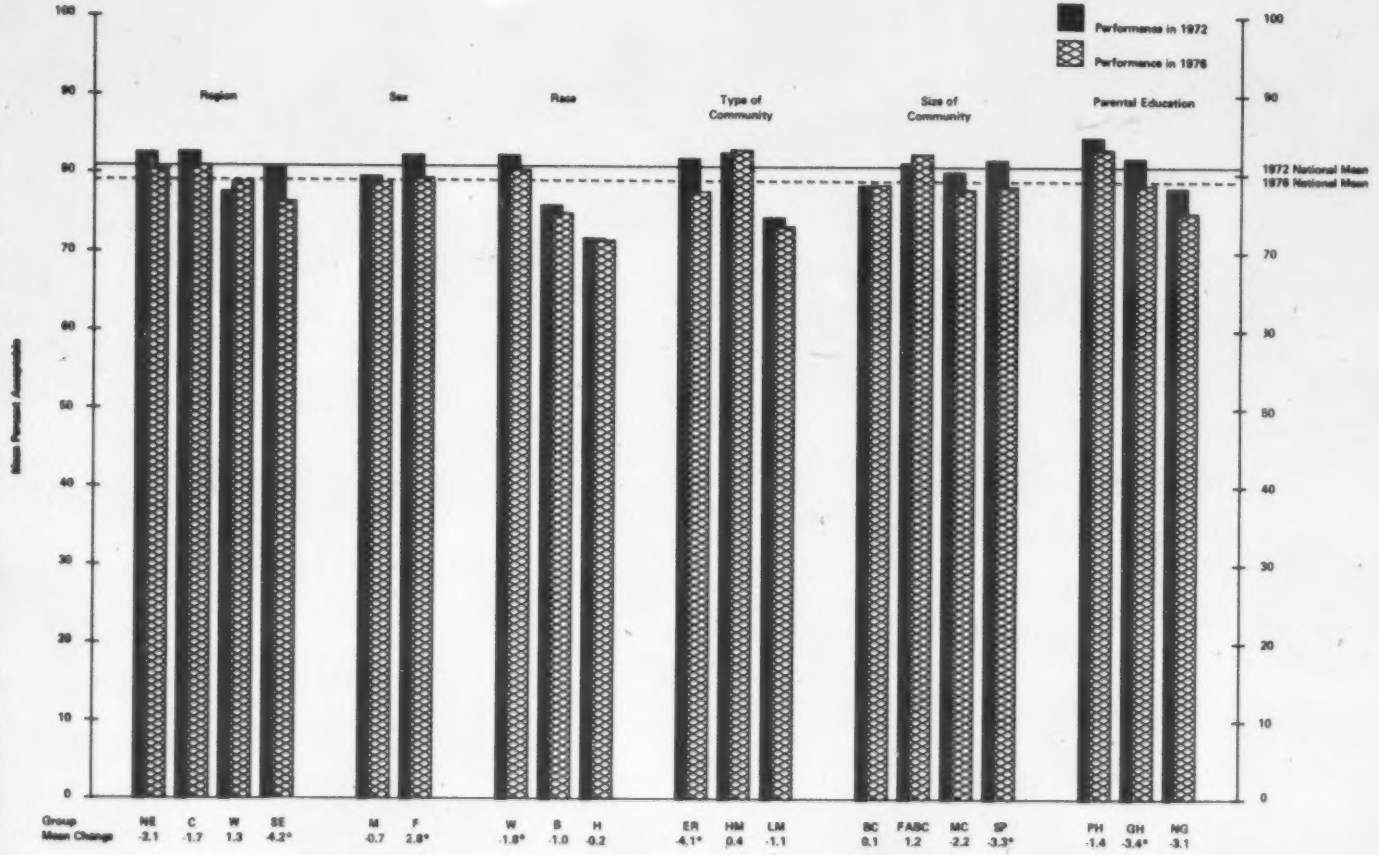


EXHIBIT 23. Mean Performance for 13-Year-Olds on Attitude Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 11)

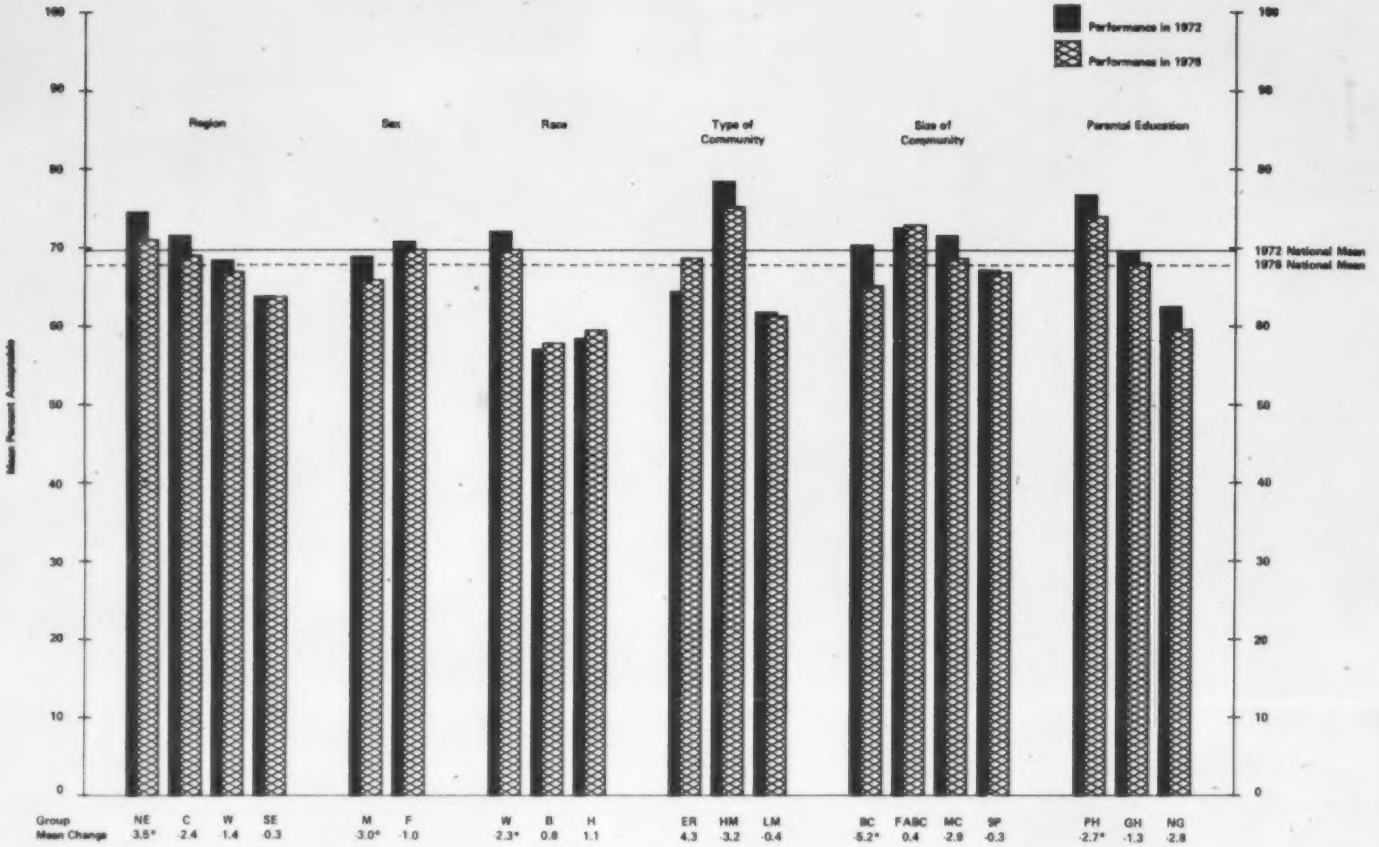
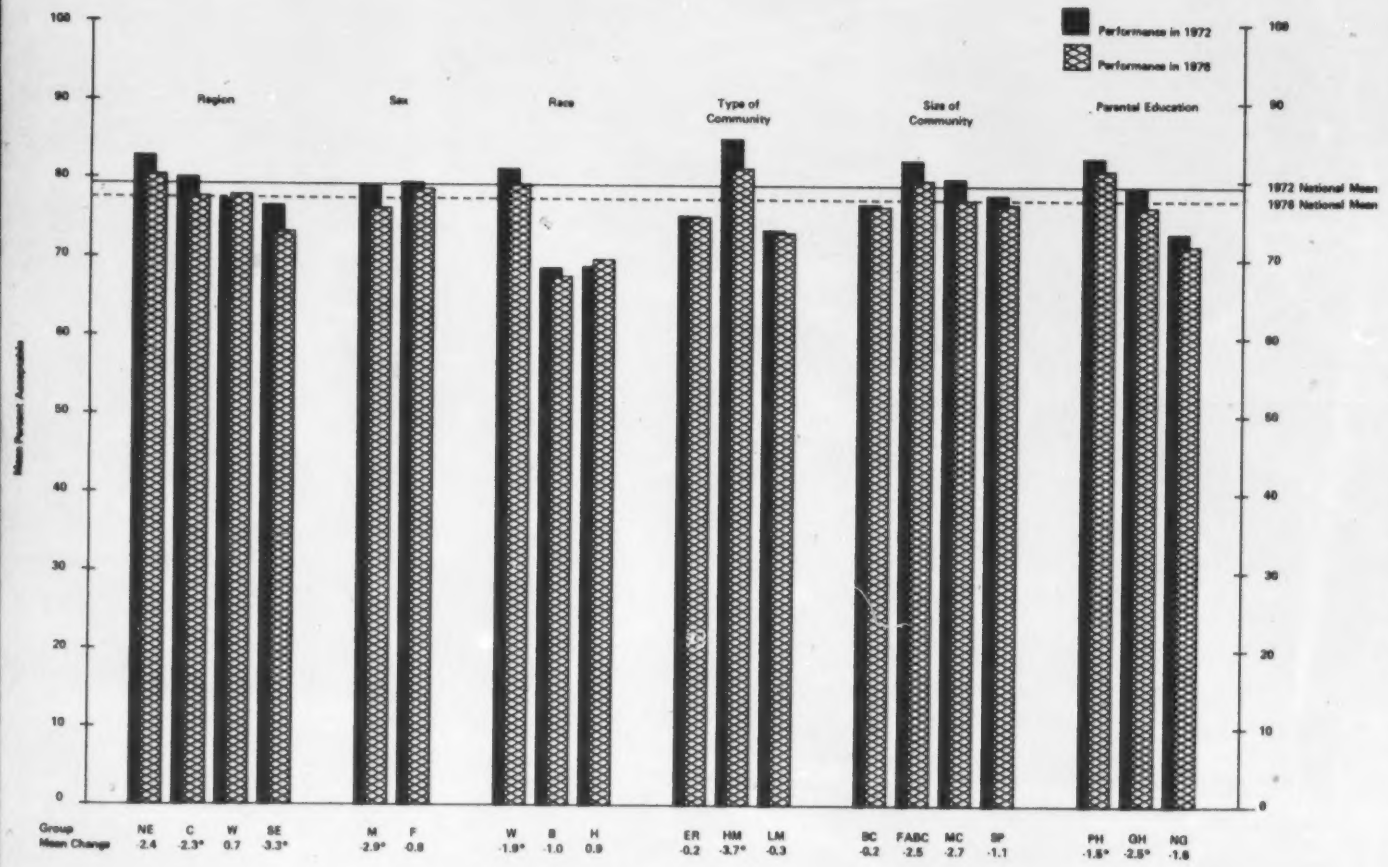


EXHIBIT 24. Mean Performance for 17-Year-Olds on Attitude Items, 1972 and 1976
(Number of Items = 14)



Female 9-year-olds did better than males in the first assessment, but, by the second assessment, achievement of males and females was about the same.

Whites declined slightly more than blacks or Hispanics. In this area, blacks' performance was somewhat above that of Hispanics, and the gaps between these groups and whites were not as large as in the other areas.

The extreme-rural group showed a significant decline, although in both assessment years its performance did not differ significantly from that of the nation as a whole. The high-metropolitan and low-metropolitan groups followed a pattern similar to that seen in other content areas.

The fringes-around-big-cities group showed an improvement in comparison with the nation as a whole, while the smaller-places group declined in relation to the national mean. Smaller places was the only community-size group that dropped significantly in achievement.

The parental-education groups followed a pattern like that seen in other areas: those whose parents had higher levels of education tended to do better than those whose parents had lower levels of education. The group having at least one parent who had graduated from high school showed a significant decrease, while the other two groups did not.

13-Year-Olds' Results

Nationally, 13-year-olds' performance dropped between 1972 and 1976 on the attitude items (Exhibit 23). The Northeast was the only region to decline significantly; however, its performance remained above the national mean in both assessments. The Southeast was consistently below the national mean, while the other two regions generally did not differ significantly from the national level.

Thirteen-year-old females did better than males on the attitude items in each assessment. Between 1972 and 1976, males at this age level declined more than females; thus, the difference in male-female performance was larger in 1976 than in 1972.

Similar to 9-year-olds, the white 13-year-olds' drop in performance was significant, while blacks and Hispanics had no significant change in performance. The difference between whites and the other two groups seemed greater for 13-year-olds than for 9-year-olds.

At this age level, students living in extreme-rural areas showed a significant improvement in comparison with national performance. The achievement of the high-metropolitan group was above that of the nation as a whole, while that of the low-metropolitan group was below it.

Big cities showed a sizeable and significant decline; none of the other community-size groups displayed significant changes.

Parental-education groups followed a pattern like that at age 9; changes were not significantly different from the national change.

17-Year-Olds' Results

As shown in Exhibit 24, at age 17 the Northeast was consistently above the nation as a whole and the Southeast below it. The Western region improved relative to the nation, showing no decline while the other regions did.

Male and female performances were very similar in the first assessment; however, by the second, females did slightly better. This was due to the fact that the male decline was larger than that of females. Similar to the younger two ages, 17-year-old whites experienced a significant decline in performance, while 17-year-old blacks and Hispanics did not.

48

For this age level, extreme-rural and low-metropolitan performance remained consistent; high-metropolitan students displayed a significant decline. None of the community-size groups changed significantly in their levels of performance or changed significantly relative to the nation. Parental-education groups followed a pattern like that seen for the younger ages.

CHAPTER 4

A COMPARISON OF 13- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS' ACHIEVEMENT

National Assessment measures the achievement of two groups of teenagers: 13-year-olds, who generally have not yet entered high school, and 17-year-olds, who are nearing the completion of their high school experience. What social studies learning takes place during the high school years? Are some topics learned by age 13? Are others primarily learned between ages 13 and 17? Are students making the same progress between ages 13 and 17 as before, or has there been a change between 1972 and 1976?

In the previous chapters, we have not compared average results across ages because each age group responded to slightly different sets of items. In this chapter, we will compare 13- and 17-year-olds' performance by presenting their average percentages of acceptable responses for identical sets of items in each content area.

Figure 1 displays 13- and 17-year-olds' performance in each social studies assessment for identical sets of items. Solid lines indicate changes in 13- and 17-year-olds' achievement between 1972 and 1976; dotted lines show the difference between 13- and 17-year-olds' performance in each assessment year.

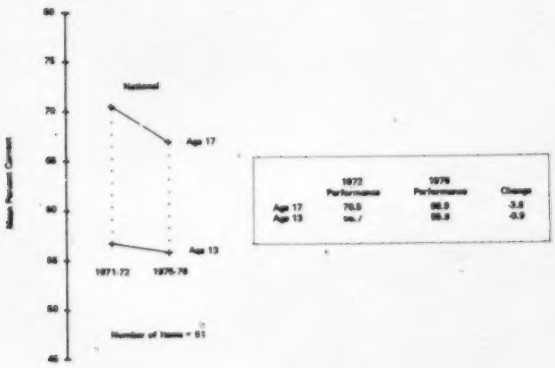
In all cases, achievement levels of 17-year-olds were above those of 13-year-olds, and the differences between the two age groups were fairly constant across content areas and assessment years. In 1972, differences between the older and younger teenagers were virtually identical — approximately 14 percentage points — in each of the three content areas. By 1976, while the difference in the skills area remained about the same, differences in knowledge and attitudes became slightly smaller — with approximately 11 percentage points separating knowledge averages and 12 percentage points separating attitude averages. The smaller difference between 13- and 17-year-olds on knowledge and attitudes items in 1976 resulted because declines for 17-year-olds between 1972 and 1976 were larger than those for 13-year-olds. In other words, 13-year-olds are not improving to meet the 17-year-olds; rather, 17-year-olds appear to be losing ground at a faster rate than 13-year-olds.

For a more complete picture of the differences in 13- and 17-year-old abilities, we can compare their achievement on some of the topics composing the areas of knowledge and skills. Since differences on these topics followed a similar pattern in each assessment, we will only examine differences for the second assessment. Average 1976 performances on these topics by both age groups appear in Table 9. On knowledge topics, differences between the two ages are largest for political knowledge items and smaller for items measuring knowledge of economics, geography and history. Items concerned with obtaining information proved considerably more difficult for 13-year-olds than for the older teenagers; the gap between the two age groups was smaller for items concerned with interpreting information. Changes in achievement on these topics between 1972 and 1976 basically followed the same pattern seen in Figure 1: 17-year-olds declined more than 13-year-olds on the knowledge topics, while both age groups showed about the same drop in achievement on the skills topics.

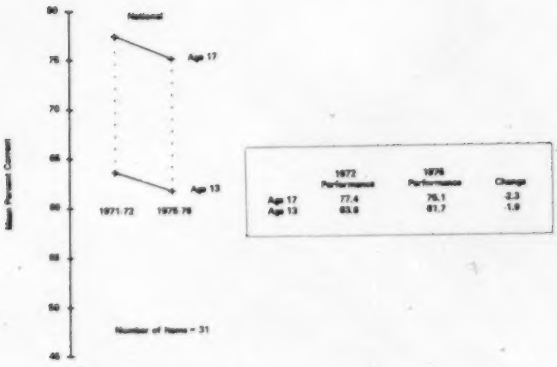
To further illustrate differences in 13- and 17-year-old achievement, we will examine

FIGURE 1. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items in Social Studies Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

Knowledge



Skills



Attitudes

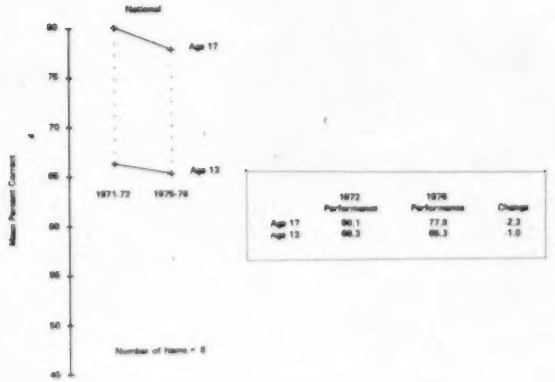


TABLE 9. Average 1976 Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds and Differences in 13- and 17-Year-Old Performance on Identical Items for Knowledge and Skills Topics

	1976 Performance		Difference
	Age 13	Age 17	
Knowledge			
Economics *(Number of items = 11)*	50.5%	60.4%	9.9
Geography *(Number of items = 7)*	47.6	56.6	9.0
History *(Number of items = 23)*	65.3	72.7	7.4
Politics *(Number of items = 21)*	46.6	61.3	14.7
Skills			
Obtaining information *(Number of items = 7)*	42.7	60.7	18.0
Interpreting information *(Number of items = 24)*	67.2	79.3	12.1

results on some specific items for the 1976 assessment. On the economics questions, 17-year-olds were much better able than the younger group to explain the increasing importance of energy to our country, to recognize the purpose of the European Common Market and to understand the role of specialized production. Thirteen- and 17-year-olds were not very far apart in ability to identify the income tax as the major income source of the federal government, even though 17-year-olds are presumably closer to paying this tax.

Thirteen- and 17-year-olds showed relatively little difference in their recognition of various technologies that were or were not available to Columbus when he sailed the Atlantic. However, while close to 60% of the 17-year-olds could identify a reason why the American colonies rebelled, the percentage of success dropped to 42% for the younger age group.

Considerable learning about politics appears to take place between ages 13 and 17. For example, 59% of the 13-year-olds, but 81% of the 17-year-olds, knew that their civil rights are stated in the U.S. Constitution — a difference of 22 percentage points. Seventeen-year-olds were considerably more familiar with some of the functions of the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. Department of State than the younger students.

Seventeen-year-olds were much more proficient than 13-year-olds in using an index, identifying the *Readers' Guide* as a source of information about magazine articles and knowing sources of information about political candidates. In general, 17-year-olds showed considerably more ability than 13-year-olds in interpreting information from maps and graphs. The two age groups were more alike in identifying statements that

either could or could not be proved.

Seventeen-year-olds were more tolerant than 13-year-olds in feeling that someone who did not believe in God should be allowed to hold public office and that someone who did not believe in God should be allowed to express that view publicly. Most students at both ages believed that teenagers should help decide course offerings in their schools. In both age groups, many felt that one should have the right to speak against the government — about 71% of the 13-year-olds and 78% of the 17-year-olds.

Group Results

The graphs in Figures 2 through 7 show differences in the performances of 13- and 17-year-olds for the various reporting groups. In addition to results for the various groups, each graph shows national performance so readers will have a frame of reference for comparisons. Definitions of reporting groups appear in Appendix A.

The information presented in Figures 2 through 7 can be used in several ways. First, we can compare 13- and 17-year-olds' achievement for a particular group in each assessment year and determine whether the difference in their achievement levels changed between assessments. Second, we can compare changes in the relative position of 13- and 17-year-olds across groups. Third, we can examine declines or improvements for various groups for each age level and see how these affect the relationship of 13- and 17-year-olds' achievement. For example, performance of 13- and 17-year-olds may become more similar in the second assessment than the first; however, in evaluating these results, it is important to consider whether such a similarity resulted from a decline at age 17, an improvement at age 13 or some combination of the two.

Reporting groups were generally in about the same position relative to the nation for both age levels and both assessment years; however, changes in performance between assessments often were not the same for both age groups.

Changes in average performance for particular groups may vary somewhat from those shown in the previous chapters because slightly different sets of items were used in calculating the averages shown here. This is especially true for the attitudes area, since, of the 11 attitude items for 13-year-olds and the 14 for 17-year-olds, only 8 were administered to both age groups. Thus, changes in average performance on the set of attitude items discussed here may differ from those presented earlier. As always, readers should consider the number and the type of items composing an average when considering the implications of the results.

Highlights of Group Results

The performance of some groups of 17-year-olds, namely blacks and those living in low-metropolitan communities, may be cause for concern. On the knowledge and skills items, average performance of black 17-year-olds was below that of white 13-year-olds in each assessment. Moreover, in 1976, performance of black 17-year-olds was below that of *all* 13-year-olds. Low-metropolitan 17-year-olds, while performing above the national level of 13-year-olds, were below high-metropolitan 13-year-olds on the knowledge and skills sections of the assessment in 1976. Thus by age 17, near the end of senior high school, some groups of students are achieving at or below the level attained by other groups during junior high school.

Nationally, on identical sets of items, 17-year-olds experienced a greater decline than 13-year-olds between 1972 and 1976. Those attending high schools in communities that are typically more affluent displayed larger declines than those in less affluent communities. And, in most instances, 17-year-olds in the more affluent areas registered larger drops in performance than their 13-year-old counterparts. For example, 17-year-olds from high-metropolitan communities ex-

perienced sharper declines than those from extreme-rural or low-metropolitan areas. In fact, the drop for the high-metropolitan group was larger than that of all 17-year-olds. Similarly, 17-year-olds from the fringes-around-big-cities area declined more than those from the other three community-size groups. Performance of 17-year-olds from both high metropolitan and fringes around big cities dropped more than that of their 13-year-old counterparts. These results indicate that the drop in performance is greatest in communities showing the highest level of achievement and that this decline is most apparent at the high school level.

Seventeen-year-olds in the West showed smaller declines than those in other regions, while declines for 13-year-olds were fairly consistent across all regions. The difference in achievement for 13- and 17-year-olds in the West was about the same in 1972 and 1976; performance of 13- and 17-year-olds in the other three regions became somewhat more alike in 1976.

Results for each of the six reporting variables on the identical set of items are discussed in greater detail below.

Region

Figure 2 indicates that for both groups of teenagers, in both assessment years, the Northeastern and Central regions generally tended to perform above the national level, the West was either fairly close to the nation or slightly below it and the Southeast was consistently below it. On the knowledge items, the 17-year-olds' decline between assessments was greater than that of 13-year-olds in all regions but the West. Western 17-year-olds experienced a considerably smaller decline in performance than their counterparts in the other three regions. Thirteen-year-olds in the Central region displayed a slight improvement between assessments; declines for the other regions were fairly uniform for this age group. Thus, as seen in Figure 2, the improvement between ages 13 and 17 became somewhat smaller in 1976 for those living in the Northeastern, Southeastern and Central regions, while in the West, the difference between these age groups was approximately the same in each assessment. On the skills items, achievement of Western 17-year-olds again dropped less than that of the other regions. Performance of 13- and 17-year-olds living in the Central and Southeastern regions became somewhat more alike in 1976; in the Northeast, the two groups remained about the same distance apart in 1976, while in the West, the difference between 13- and 17-year-olds was slightly larger in the second assessment. The attitude items displayed many of the same trends as the skills items, the only noteworthy exception being the improvement of the 13-year-olds in the Southeast.

Sex

Males at both ages outperformed females on social studies knowledge items in each assessment (Figure 3). While 17-year-olds of both sexes showed greater decreases in their knowledge of social studies than their younger counterparts, female 17-year-olds apparently declined more than males. On the skills items, performance of the two sexes did not differ at either age, and changes between assessments were virtually identical for both sexes and both ages. Females did somewhat better than males on attitude questions. At age 13, females declined on attitude items while males did not; at age 17, performance of both sexes declined at about the same rate.

Race

Results for racial groups will include only performance of blacks and whites, since data on Hispanic achievement on identical sets of exercises are not available. In each assessment, the performance of black 17-year-olds was below that of white 13-year-olds on both the knowledge and skills items (Figure 4). In fact, achievement of black 17-year-olds in 1976 was slightly below the average for *all* 13-year-

FIGURE 2. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Region in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items – Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

FIGURE 3. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Sex in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items – Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

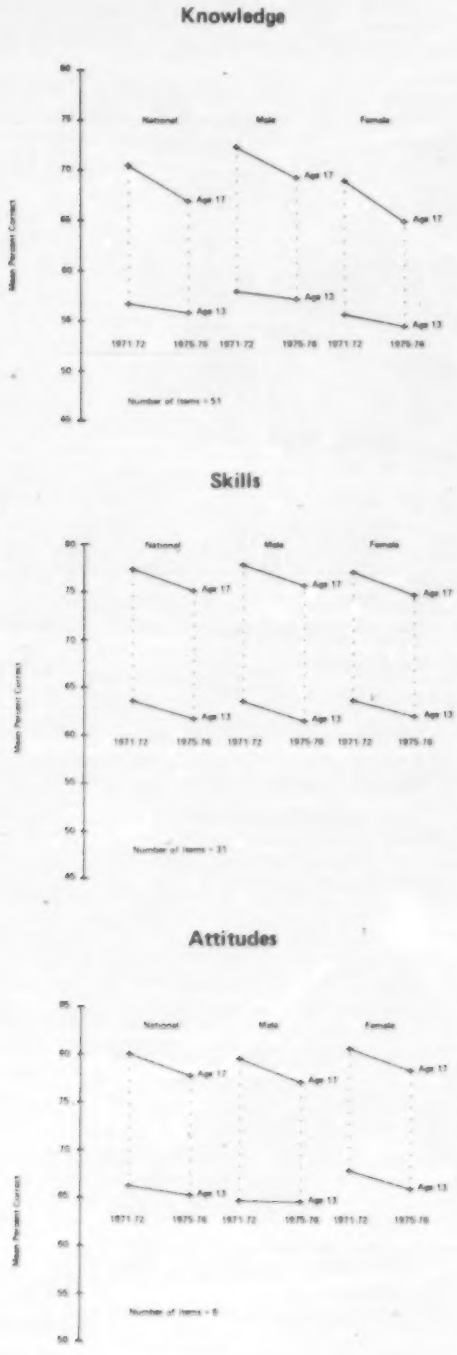
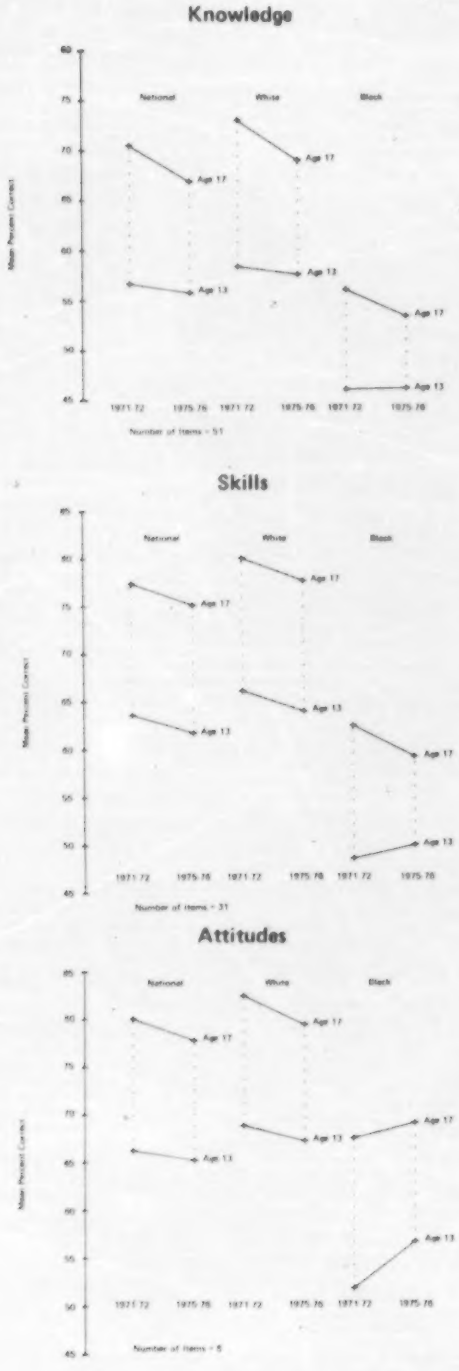


FIGURE 4. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Race in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items – Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes



olds — including both whites and blacks — on skills and knowledge items.

Performance of black 13-year-olds either improved or remained stable on knowledge and skills items, while white 13-year-olds registered declines. However, at age 17, blacks tended to decline at the same rate as whites, so at the older age level, the gap between the two races is not decreasing.

On the knowledge items, the difference between the performance of blacks and whites appeared to become larger with age. The difference between black and white 17-year-olds was larger than that between black and white 13-year-olds in both assessments; as seen in Figure 4, this means that the improvement between ages 13 and 17 was smaller for blacks than whites. For both racial groups, the difference between ages 13 and 17 was smaller in the second assessment than in the first, since declines for 17-year-olds were greater than those for the younger students.

On the skills items, the gap between blacks and whites increased with age in the second assessment, but this phenomenon was not evident in the first assessment. Black and white 17-year-olds experienced similar rates of decline between assessments; however, black 13-year-olds showed an improvement, while whites at this age declined about as much as whites at age 17. Thus, for whites, the difference in achievement between ages 13 and 17 remained about the same in each assessment, while the difference between the two groups of black teenagers was smaller in the second assessment than the first.

Black performance on attitude items improved at both ages, while that of whites declined. However, black performance was still below that of whites, with 17-year-old blacks in 1976 achieving only slightly better than 13-year-old whites.

Type of Community

Figure 5 displays performance for 13- and 17-year-olds living in different types of communities. A consistent pattern held across ages, assessment years and content areas: those living in high-metropolitan communities performed above the national level, those living in low-metropolitan communities were below the nation and those living in extreme-rural areas were generally close to or slightly below the national level. The achievement of low-metropolitan 17-year-olds was either close to or below that of high-metropolitan 13-year-olds.

On the knowledge items, changes between assessments were small for 13-year-olds in all three community-type groups. At age 17, while all three groups experienced declines on these items, that for the high-metropolitan group was greater than for the other two. As a result, the performance of the older and younger high-metropolitan teenagers was more alike in the second assessment than the first.

Many of the same patterns were evident on the skills items. Thirteen-year-olds' performance did not change substantially between assessments for any of the community-type groups, while 17-year-olds living in high-metropolitan communities experienced more of a decline than those from the other two community types. Achievement of low-metropolitan 17-year-olds was similar to that of high-metropolitan 13-year-olds.

On the attitudes items, extreme-rural teenagers showed a substantial increase, while high-metropolitan students at both ages experienced substantial declines.

Size of Community

The size-of-community groups for both ages follow much the same pattern in each assessment in all three content areas (Figure 6). The fringes-around-big-cities group was consistently above the nation at both age levels. The other groups were generally fairly close to the national level, with some minor variations. At age 13, those living in big cities

FIGURE 5. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Type of Community in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

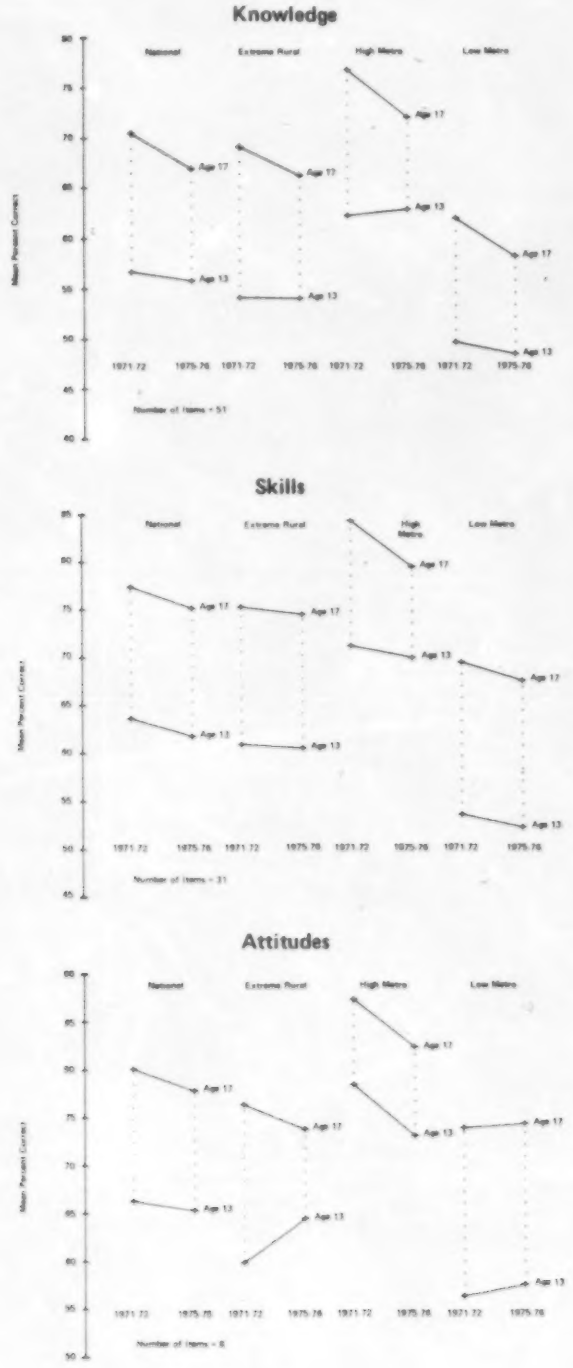


FIGURE 6. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Size of Community in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items — Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

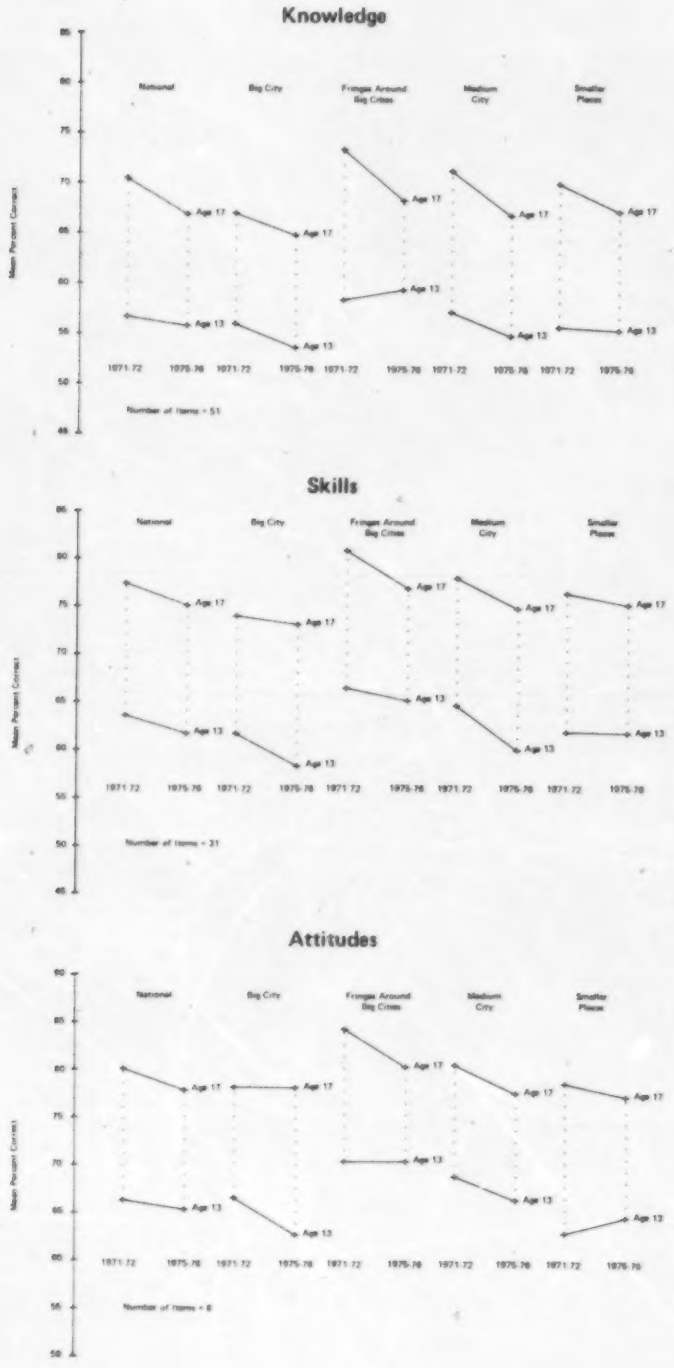
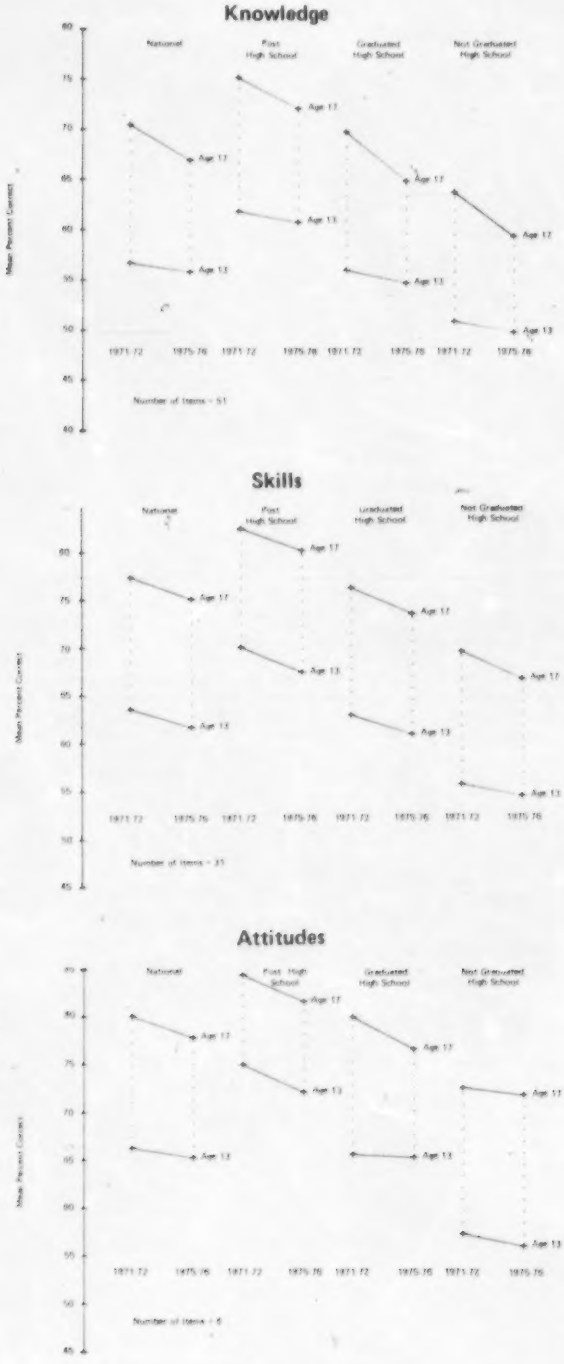


FIGURE 7. Average Performance of 13- and 17-Year-Olds by Level of Parental Education in 1972 and 1976 on Identical Items – Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes



and medium cities experienced larger declines than those from the fringes around big cities or from smaller places. In fact, 13-year-olds from the city fringes and from smaller places showed improvements between assessments in some cases. Seventeen-year-olds from the fringes around big cities and those from medium cities tended to show larger declines between assessments than those from the other two community-size groups. Performance of 13- and 17-year-olds from the fringes around big cities became more alike in the second assessment; this tendency was not as marked for the other community-size groups.

Level of Parental Education

Achievement of the different parental-education groups followed the same pattern for each of the three content areas in both assessments, as displayed in Figure 7. At both age levels, those with a parent having some education beyond high school did best, while those whose parents had not graduated from high school did least well. On the knowledge and skills items, changes in group performance were similar to the national change — 17-year-olds showing a larger decline than 13-year-olds on the knowledge items and both groups declining at about the same rate on the skills items. On the attitude items, 17-year-olds whose parents had not graduated from high school declined less rapidly than those in the other two groups. For 13-year-olds, declines were smallest for the group having a parent who had graduated from high school.

APPENDIX

DEFINITIONS OF REPORTING GROUPS

The National Assessment of Educational Progress examines results for various groups of people within the national population. These groups are defined as follows.

Group Definitions

Sex

Results are presented for males and females.

Race

Results are presented for blacks, whites and Hispanics.

Region

The country has been divided into four regions — Northeast, Southeast, Central and West. States included in each region are shown on the following map.

Size of Community

Big city. Students in this group attend schools within the city limits of cities with a population over 200,000.

Fringes around big cities. Students in this group attend schools within metropolitan areas served by cities with a population greater than 200,000 but outside the city limits.

Medium city. Students in this group attend schools in cities having a population between 25,000 and 200,000 not classified in the fringes-around-big-cities category.

Smaller places. Students in this group attend schools in communities having a population less than 25,000 not classified in the fringes-around-big-cities category.

Type of Community

These communities are defined by an occupational profile of the area served by a school as well as the size of the community in which the school is located.

High-metropolitan (advantaged-urban) communities. Students in this group attend schools in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are in professional or managerial positions.

Low-metropolitan (disadvantaged-urban) communities. Students in this group attend schools in or around cities with a population

greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

Extreme rural. Students in this group attend schools in areas with a population under 10,000 where most of the residents are farmers or farm workers.

Level of Parental Education

Three categories of parental education are defined by National Assessment. These categories are: (1) those whose parents did not graduate from high school, (2) those who have at least one parent who graduated from high school and (3) those who have at least one parent who has had some post high school education.

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